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A Cossack Story
by the Author of
"White Falcon"

KOUM

By HAROLD LAMB

THE *essaul* reined in his horse and looked around.

"We can halt here," he said.

The seven Cossacks of the detachment also glanced about them, at the rolling plain with its brown grass and occasional clump of poplars down in some gully. Here and there a knob of red rock uprose. Ahead of them, within a stone's toss, the cinnamon colored river moved sluggishly between its borders of dark rushes. They were on a bare knoll, and they could see across the river.

All of them searched the far bank with their eyes. Nothing moved. Only banks of yellow clay and sand stretched above the rank steppe grass. From the banks light gleamed fitfully; but it was no more than the reflected glow of the sunset behind them upon some bits of quartz.

For a moment the Cossacks whispered among themselves, and one of them addressed the *essaul*, who was in command of the detachment.

"Look here, Father Kirdiak, we ought to have a fire."

"Can't be done," Kirdiak grunted, and then reflected. They had shot an antelope back in the hills, and they had had a long, hot ride to the river. "Don't you know this is an outpost of the cordon? Over the river yonder are Tartars and other devils."

"But the captain won't come out this far, and who will know?"

"Well—" Kirdiak pushed his *kalpak* back and scratched his shaven forehead—"all right. Only make it behind the mound."

Promptly the Cossacks dismounted. They lifted their packs from behind the saddles, stretched and yawned. While two of them led the horses down to water, the others scattered about the knoll and reappeared with armfuls of thorn bush, withered tamarisk and roots. One had even found some dried dung.

"Camels." He smiled as he passed the stout *essaul*.

"Was there a trail, Ostap?"

"A path?" The young Cossack shook his head impatiently. "God knows, Father. We'll have a look in the morning."

Kirdiak thought of going down to examine the ground where the dung had been. If there was a trail passing over the steppe here, he ought to know about it. But his legs were stiff, and he felt very comfortable stretched out on his sheepskins. It would be dark down in the gullies, he told himself—better to have a look round in the morning. So he struck a spark into a handful of dry grass and lighted his pipe.

As he did so he looked longingly at a



clay jug beside him. The jug contained a gallon of corn brandy, and Kirdiak had brought it along in case God should send an emergency, when he and the detachment might have need of something to drink. Otherwise, it was forbidden to drink spirits when on duty. The detachment knew that he had the jug, and so he dared not let it out of his sight.

"Hi there, Borchik!" he called to one

of the men who had been watering the horses. "Go and watch by the river."

The tall Cossack hastening toward the fire turned aside and picked up his musket. Without a word he disappeared through the brush into the gloom.

Kirdiak stretched himself out on his massive back and pulled at his pipe. He could hear the whispering of the river, the croaking of frogs and some of the Cos-

sacks arguing about snares they were going to set for the waterfowl. They would have fish, too—much better than the dried meat and rusks of their rations.

They were all registered Cossacks. That is, they were enrolled in the frontier force which served along the vast borderland stretching from the Caspian Sea up to the white tundras of the polar sea. They were the trail breakers and the guardians of the Empire of All the Russias, which moved slowly and inexorably as a juggernaut car into the east.

Already in this mid-summer of the year 1806 the frontier had passed over Mother Volga and was stretching its posts toward the salt deserts of the south-east.

And ahead of the posts moved the *stanitzas* of the Cossacks who had once been a free people along the River Don. The older men among them remembered well how the Empress Catherine had abolished their liberty and had broken up the Siech—the war encampment of the Zaporoghian Cossacks. So the cordon of Cossack villages moved away from the forts and soldiers of the Czars, out into the ranges. Here they had no tithes to pay, and they could worship in the old fashion as they pleased. Only they had to defend themselves against the Kalmuk and Kirghiz Tartars who had grazed over these same ranges.

Behind them the Empire smiled indulgently at their trek because it helped enlarge the frontier and beat off the Tartar clans.

Kirdiak's detachment had been ordered out by the *stanitza ataman* who wanted to have an advanced post at the river, twenty miles from the villages of the *stanitza* with their cattle and maize and melon fields. A horde of Tartars could gallop that twenty miles in two hours, and the *ataman* instructed Kirdiak to watch for any tribesmen crossing the river, which was then shoaling in the midsummer heat. The Cossacks of the detachment all had picked horses, and at least two of them were to start back with the news if Tartars were seen in force.



KIRDIAK was pondering this idly, when he sat up suddenly—his pipe falling from his teeth and his hand grasping at the long pistol in his belt. A strange figure stood against the sunset glow beside him, although he had heard no tread on the ground.

He drew out the pistol but did not lift it. He saw that the man wore a long, black lambskin coat with torn sleeves, and boots of soft, unpolished leather, and a high black *kalpak* like his own but much the worse for wear. Over his shoulder was slung a musket, and from his wide belt hung some bloody pheasants, a curved Circassian dagger, a tobacco pouch and powder horn.

"Christ save us!" Kirdiak muttered. "Why didn't you speak?"

The stranger looked around the knoll.

"What's in the jug?" he asked in a deep, ringing voice.

"A little—" the *essaul* remembered his dignity. He picked up his pipe and got to his feet. His bullet head only came to the stranger's chin. "Eh, what's this? What's your name—why are you wandering out here?"

The tall Cossack glanced down at the sergeant.

"I am Koum," he said, and walked away toward the embers of the fire where the antelope steaks were sizzling in a pan by the *kasha* pot.

"God be with you, Uncle!" The other men greeted him.

"*Chelom vam*," responded Koum. "The forehead to you, brothers."

When the sergeant came up, they all got out daggers and caught up the steaks, wrapping strings of fried garlic round them. While he ate, Kirdiak scanned the stranger, tossing some loose brush upon the embers so that the fire sprang up.

Koum had taken off his *kalpak*. His head had been shaved—all except a long lock of black hair on the top. So was his chin shaved and the middle of his mustache trimmed, leaving the ends hanging down in shaggy bunches. His brown eyes slanted a little at the corners, and the

hard skin of his face had dried and wrinkled from years of exposure. The muscles of his full neck wrinkled under his long jaw. His shirt, open at the throat, had been soaked in tar.

"Black as a she-devil," Kirdiak thought. "No one could see him at night. He walks like a hunter, but he wears a long sword. He's had a bath, too, by God, and a Tartar barber trimmed his head like that—so Allah can pull him up by the scalp-lock when he dies."

He drew the cork out of the jug and at once small bowls and silver cups appeared in the hands of the Cossacks. But Kirdiak filled his own cup first and offered it to the stranger.

"*Koshkildui!*" Koum said in his deep voice. "God be with you!"

That was a Tartar greeting, Kirdiak reflected. He noticed that the stranger had claw scratches over his right hand and wrist. So Koum owned a hawk—carried the falcon around without a glove.

"Look here, lads," he muttered, "we'll have a cup of the brandy because we have a guest."

Koum handed back the sergeant's cup, which Kirdiak filled and drained before he poured out measures for the men.

"Health to you, Koum!" Ostap laughed, drinking. "How do you live out here?"

"How not? There's meat enough—aye, buffalo and antelope and the water fowl."

"But how did you find us?"

"Only village girls would light a fire against a red sunset. The smoke can be seen. You're young—you still smell of milk. Besides, it's not good."

"How, not good?"

"This sunset, like blood. Aye, the Tartars say it means Allah has hung the banners of death in the sky, and some one will die before the sun is seen again."

"An old woman's tale," grunted Kirdiak. "If a man dies, it happens that way. A sunset can't do good or ill to any one."

"A red moon is worse," put in one of the older men.

Brandy gurgled from the jug, and tongues were loosened. Some said it was

a bad sign when horses stumbled or snorted, although it was good when they neighed. Others maintained that the worst of all was to see a vampire, whining in the darkness.

"That may be, but a sunset means nothing—nothing," persisted the sergeant who was a stubborn man and, besides, had served years in the regular army where an order was an order and the officers took no account of omens. "Harken, Koum—how is it along the river here? Do the Tartars raid often?"

"Nay," said the stranger slowly. "The Black Hats are moving to the north, looking for better grass. Now, the White Sheep are on the range across the river."

"What whitesheep?" demanded Kirdiak.

"Tek!" Koum shook his head. "You are new to the steppe, my brother. They are Turkomans of the White Sheep clan—real wolves. Now, the hordes used to raid twice in the year, at harvest time, just like this—and when the snow hardens. But you can't tell what the Turkomans will do. They slash and rush off like wolves, or perhaps they make war without warning. They are slayers—eh, they carry off even eight year old girls. But they kill all the younger ones, and the very old people."

For an instant the sergeant thought of the hundreds of people back in the new *stanitza*, putting roofs on their cottages, and working in the fields still full of stones. They had maize and melons and cattle, but little else.

"Is there a Turkoman village near?"

He nodded toward the river.

"Nay—two hours ride is their *aul*, by a salt lake. At times they come over to hunt, one or two of them. They took my horse and shot my dog once when I was off with the hawk. Down there is a ford, where they come over."



AGAIN Kirdiak meditated upon the camel dung and the path and the ford so close at hand. He wished he had not let the men make a fire—but then they would have had no steaks. He leaned

over and thrust the cork into the jug.

"What are you doing?" rumbled Koum.

"No more brandy. We've had enough."

"It's bad luck, *essaul*," Koum shook his head ominously. "Never cork up wine until it's all been drunk. The devil watches out for a thing like that. *He* will have it in for you if you don't pour out the rest."

One of the older Cossacks muttered assent. Kirdiak, however, was stubborn.

"Against orders to drink at a post," he said bluntly.

"That won't change the bad luck," responded Koum. "I'll drink the half that's left—then the bad luck won't come."

"Devil take you!" roared the sergeant. "The jug is half full, with corn brandy, not red wine. Hey, it won't go down the gullet of an antelope hunter."

Koum stood up and stretched his long arms.

"Tck! Kirdiak, you may be a sergeant of the new army, but it's clear that you never learned how to drink like a Cossack. When you were nuzzling your mother, I was in the Siech, in the brotherhood of the Zaporoghians. You have heard of them, when the bandura players sang. They didn't drill in the village street—one, two, halt! Nay, by the hide and hair of the horned one, they went to *war*. They crossed the great sea Charnomar in their *kayuks*. Even the Sultan trembled when the Zaporoghians took to the road. And the Khan of all the hordes was glad to call them brothers."

The younger men of the detachment glanced up, grinning. For the *balalaika* players and the blind men sang of the glorious time when the Cossacks had been free, and of the deeds of the *atamans* of long ago—of Khlit who had been called the Wolf, and Demid who had raided Aleppo. Few Zaporoghians survived. Koum must have been young when he had belonged to the last brotherhood of the war camp.

"We may drill," muttered Kirdiak who was ruffled by the veteran's boasting, "but we have long muskets and we can use them. We have horses, too, and

we don't let the tribesmen lift them."

"I'll get mine back from the devils."

Koum's white teeth flashed in a smile.

"Only wait a bit. But take heed, *essaul*—the Turkomans are real wolves. If they take one of you, they'll send him back with a pair of high, red boots. They'll strip the skin off him, below the knees, and turn him out to walk in the salt desert." He pondered, frowning. "Nay, it will not be easy for you, out here. The signs are bad. Don't you know it's tempting God not to drink up what has been opened? In the Siech they used to drink from barrels, not jugs. A man who couldn't empty your jug and dance the *trepak* after it, or jump from one side to the other of a running horse, would be sent back to the villages. In the old time they knew how to drink and how to love the girls. Ask the beauties of Stamboul or Aleppo if that wasn't so. Do you know why the cavalry of the Sultan and the Khan of the Krim—aye, and the Cherkess and the Persian Shah is so fine today?"

"Nay," growled Kirdiak, "but—"

"Because there's Cossack blood in all of them. The Cossacks of the Siech embraced their Moslem mothers—"

A shout of laughter interrupted Koum, and voices called out to the sergeant to open the jug again.

"Drink health to the Zaporoghian. He's right, Father—it's a sin to hoard up the jug. Borchik hasn't had his cup yet."

Kirdiak, however, got to his feet angrily and spat.

"Fools! You can listen to the old beggar's lying. I'm going to sleep. By God, it's for me to give orders here. Ostap, go and relieve Borchik. And one of you tie up the horses near the fire and sleep outside of them."

Carrying the jug and without any other word to Koum, he went off to his sheepskins.

"The Little Father's got his hair up," laughed the oldest Cossack. "Well, Uncle—"

But Koum rose to his feet, throwing down the half dozen pheasants from his belt.

"Here's a gift for the pot. I see there's no welcome in this post—no fun at all. God send you fortune, to change the bad luck."

He picked up his musket and strode away into the gloom, when he heard a step behind him.

"Stop, Uncle!" Ostap begged. "Don't go away angry."

"I wasn't boasting," Koum muttered.

"Well, come and watch with me. Show me where the ford is."

After a moment the Zaporoghian halted and leaned on his musket.

"I'll watch the river with you, if you'll tell the sergeant—tell him we'll divide the time between us. He need send no one out until daylight."

In a little while Koum joined the young Cossack in the darkness under some poplars, against a sandbank from which a long stretch of the river was visible. A full moon, rising above the dunes of the east bank, cast a vague radiance over the plain. Distant hillocks stood out clearly, while the river itself lay in the murk between black masses of rushes.

Ostap wondered how Koum had found him, and how the hunter had come within a stone's throw of the poplars without being seen.

"Borchik was wild." He laughed. "Because he did not taste a drop of the brandy."

But Koum would not talk. He lay back on his elbow in the sand, and before long Ostap, who felt the drowsiness of youth after a full meal of meat, began to yawn.

"You sleep," Koum advised him presently. "I'll call you in time to watch. If I walk around, don't pay attention—only if I fire the musket."

Ostap muttered a protest, but presently wrapped his sheepskin coat over him and stretched out in the sand, dropping off to sleep in a moment. After listening to his breathing a while, Koum got up and moved about among the poplars. Ostap did not even check his heavy breathing.



TWO hours later the moon stood high over the river. Tiny gleams of light ran along the shallows and vanished. The edges of drifting clouds high over the steppe showed white, until they passed across the river, sinking everything in a half shadow.

A dry breeze ruffled the deep pools, swaying the dense rushes along the bank until they looked like silver. The rustling of the poplars merged into the croaking of the frogs and the hurrying whisper of the water. Soundlessly an owl passed over the moving rushes.

Koum sat again on the sandbank. But now the clay jug rested between his knees, and at intervals he lifted it up, and a slight gurgling could be heard. Each time he had to lift the jug higher. He did not rouse Ostap, who was sleeping peacefully.

Not for many moons had Koum tasted corn brandy like this. He sighed gratefully and checked a sudden snort. The skin pricked along his scalp and he threw off his heavy *kalpak*. He felt more than comfortably warm, and slid the lamb-skin coat from his shoulders. Such a fine night it was, he thought, for hunting along the river. But he had to watch for these village girls who called themselves Cossacks.

The round moon glowed down upon his bare head. A golden moon. And what a river it was! Over there the owl skimmed the rushes again, and something slid into the water. A shadow slipped past the poplars and Koum sniffed. A red fox. And he couldn't even fire off his musket without bringing curses on his head. Koum tipped up the jug again. Strange that the brandy didn't come out of it any more!

Across the river he heard a plunging and rushing among the high reeds. Only one thing made a sound like that—wild pigs rooting along the bank. Over there was tender, roast pig, and here he was, sitting like an old mama by a cradle. To the devil with it all!

Koum got to his feet restlessly, and planted his legs wide, to keep from sway-

ing toward the rushing river. A strange thing he saw. There behind him the devil had hung another moon in the sky. But this did not fool Koum. He knew that the pig was across the river. So he loosened his long sword and laid it on his coat. Then taking up and priming his gun, he hastened toward the shallow ford. His black figure was only visible when it crossed the strip of moonlight in mid-stream, and he made no sound that could be heard above the wash of the river. The cold water ran into his leather bag trousers.

Climbing out on a sandbank, he stepped into the mesh of rushes where the frogs were holding their chorus. Quietly as he advanced, the pig took alarm. A sudden splashing ahead of him changed to a rustling that went away swiftly.

"They've gone into the *balka*," he thought, "and I may have a shot at them if they turn up the side."

He hurried after the pig into a long gully, full of high grass and brush. The bottom of the gully was in deep shadow, only the steep clay bank on his left being in the moonlight. Upon this Koum kept his eyes as he went forward, twisting among the brushwood. He could still hear a faint scampering.

The *balka* turned first one way and then the other. Once Koum thought he saw the pig far ahead up the bank. He walked slowly now, his wet boots making no noise in the sand. Among a nest of boulders he stopped to listen. Then he laid his musket down, and squatted over it. Squinting up into the sky, he held his breath and began to count.

Along the moonlit bank, clear against the luminous sky, mounted men were picking their way toward the river. And Koum did not trouble his head about the pigs any more. A single glance at the shaggy sheepskin cloaks and turban head wraps—the dark round shields and thin ponies, showed the hunter that these were Turkomans.

Koum counted fifteen and thought that a couple more were riding off to the side. Half of them carried long flintlocks,

in their hands, not slung over their backs. Tartars would not move at night, and only the prospect of a raid would bring out Turkomans before daylight. They were arguing in low voices and as they passed over his head he caught a few words. "*Choupak bir kozaghi*—those dogs of Cossacks . . ."

What devil of ill omen could have brought a war party to this place on the river, at this time? They must have seen the smoke of the sergeant's fire, and watched the Cossack detachment at sunset. Now, when they thought the Cossacks would be deep in sleep, they were going to cross the ford and rush the camp.

Suddenly a chill chased up Koum's back. The Cossacks were all asleep, even Ostap. Why in God's name hadn't he roused the youngster when he went off after the pig? Now here he was, cut off without a horse.

He did not move until the riders had disappeared down the bank, and he had made certain no more were coming after. If they had been Tartars he might have whined like a vampire in the darkness, and scared them back to their tents. But these were gray wolves, following the scent of blood. Well, the omens had given warning that blood would flow before sunrise.

Koum could only see one moon in the sky now. Getting to his feet, he scrutinized the bank of the gully to his right, in shadow. Slinging his gun on his back he began to climb the highest point, pulling himself up by roots but keeping his feet clear of stones. At the edge of the clay bank he turned his head cautiously. Nothing was to be seen except the summits of the dunes and the dark patches of brush. The Turkomans had reached the river bank.

Scrambling out, he crawled up among the rocks of the height and peered toward the river. He could see it clearly, some three hundred paces distant, between the masses of rushes. But he kept his eyes upon the stretch of moonlight in the center of the ford. Quickly he thrust his gun forward, powdered the priming, sighted it, and waited.

No help for it. He had been on watch, and the detachment was asleep. He had forgotten to call Ostap when he went off, and now he must shoot off his musket, to give the alarm. If he fired, the wolves would see the smoke. They would come back, find his tracks easily in this accursed light. Some of them would watch the ford, while the others would ride him down like a hare.



A RIDER appeared in the ford. Then others after him. Koum's head buzzed as he sighted his gun again. Too far off in that half light!

"To the Father and Son!" he muttered, and pulled the trigger.

At the crash of the musket behind them, the heads of the Turkomans turned toward him. They remained motionless, while he peered at them under the smoke cloud—they were astonished no doubt, and hesitated whether to go on or turn back. Then a red flash came from the darkness under the poplars where Ostap had been sleeping, and Koum saw the Turkomans turn their horses toward the gully.

Without waiting to reload, he ran back from the rocks, down one long slope and up the next. He headed away from the river, keeping close to the *balka*, until he dared run no longer for fear of being seen. He glanced down into the gully, and saw that it had become shallow—opening into a kind of bowl filled with poplars and brush. Well, he had no choice. He must head in here.

Digging his heels into the dry clay, he ran down the slope, leaped through the brush and plunged in, under the first trees. As he did so the hunter swerved. Something light had flashed before his eyes, and when he threw himself to the side, he felt steel rip through his loose sleeve.

"Ghar!" A hoarse voice screamed into his face.

Swiftly Koum swung forward the muzzle of his heavy musket. It struck something yielding—knocked it back. A

second time he dodged a knife slash, stumbling over broken ground as he did so. Grasping his musket in both hands, he leaped high in the air and smashed the butt of the gun forward as he came down. It struck fair upon something that crunched under it. And that something fell heavily to the ground, moving jerkily.

Koum steadied himself on his feet, and swung the butt of the gun down again with all the strength of his shoulders. Bones snapped under the impact and he heard a deep groan. Stepping aside and paying no heed to the spasmodic movements of the wounded man, he bent his head and listened intently.

By the river shots boomed out, but the hunter was listening for the tread or stamp of a horse. The Turkoman who attacked him would not have gone far from his mount. Koum could perceive no sign of a horse. He saw, however, something else.

In the center of the poplar grove the ground was clear, and in the shafts of moonlight a small horsehide tent was visible. Koum reloaded his musket and strode forward. He came upon trampled ground, strewn with bundles of sheepskins and furs, and a few pots. And he swore under his breath.

"Eh, it was a hunting party," he thought. "They camped here, and saw the Cossacks. Well, it's true they will come back."

He heard a scattering of shots and a faint shouting. He started to make his way out of the depression, but stopped and shook his head. Useless to go up on the steppe with the horsemen coming in. And when they came, they would find their wounded comrade. Nothing for it but to hide in the grove until daylight, and then trust to luck. Yet his luck had been bad—

Hoofs thudded closer, and a shrill voice hailed—

"Ai-a, Ahmet!"

Koum stepped into deeper shadow, gripping his gun. Then horses galloped by, tearing through the brush. The grove seemed to be filled with them, going past. A shadowy rider leaned down and caught

up a bundle of furs and swerved away. A white horse plunged to a stop in the flecks of moonlight so near he might have touched it with the muzzle of his gun. Backed against the bole of a tree, Koum did not move.

"*Ai-a, Ahmet, shaitan chavassar!* Hey, Ahmet—may the black devil ride you!"

The lank Turkoman on the white horse shouted angrily, and flung himself to the ground. He darted into the tent, and Koum leaned his gun against the tree, pulling his knife from his belt.

He strode toward the horse, which snorted and drew away. Then the tribesman ran out of the shelter, carrying a bundle in his arms. Even in the gloom he saw the Cossack, and dropped his burden, leaping forward with a curved sword swinging in his hand.

Koum turned on his heels and flung himself at the Turkoman's knees, as the sword and long sleeve swished over him. and as he struck the man, he thrust up with his long knife. The blade stuck in flesh, but came out as the two men rolled on the ground. Koum buried his knife again in his antagonist, under the ribs. The man choked and curled himself up, while the Cossack felt on the ground and picked up the sword the other had dropped.

"You won't get up, *shaitan*," he muttered, running his hand over the bundle the Turkoman had dropped. Nothing but stinking robes. The sword, however, felt like a good one. Koum put it under his belt and picked up his gun, listening the while. Other men were riding past.

He went over quietly to the horse, and this time caught the bridle. Swinging himself into the saddle, he found the flat stirrups, as the horse sidled and reared. Tightening the rein, he felt the neck and shoulders of his new mount.

"A good one," he thought. "A real steed." Now, at least, he could risk a dash down the *balka* to the river.

Near at hand a gun roared. Hearty voices cried—

"Strike, strike, brothers!"

Koum turned his head, astonished.

"By God, the village girls have come over the river. The fools!"

Lifting his deep voice, he shouted:

"Cossacks! This way—down in the *balka*. Here is their nest!"

A moment more and horses pushed in under the poplars. Ostap trotted in front, peering from side to side.

"Hi, Cossack!" he called. "Where is that nest?"

"This way," Koum answered, and drew back quickly as the young Cossack struck out at him, suddenly. "Can't you see, you wildeat?"

"Ho, uncle," laughed the youngster, "I didn't know you had a horse. Look, brothers, there's the camp!"



SOME of them flung themselves from the saddle to ransack the tent and the ground.

Finding the dead Turkoman, they began to pull off the best of his garments.

"There's another back of you, five lance lengths," Koum told them.

"What devil brought you here, Koum?" demanded Kirdiak, panting. "Did you see us chase them? We shot one up on the dunes, and Borchik has his horse. Omelko was shot in the ribs as we came over the ford—he's back on the other side with Andriev who lost his horse."

Koum made a quick reckoning. If two Cossacks were out of it, they had only six, with himself, against about twice their number of tribesmen.

"*Essaul*," he said earnestly, "don't be stubborn now. Give the order to go back to the camp, at once."

"By God, can't you see *they* are running from us."

"They were afraid of a trap, because they were shot at from behind, at the ford. They had not counted your heads, yet. Now they will turn back on both sides, and cut you off from the ford. Harken!"

Kirdiak lifted his head. On the dunes above him he heard a wolf's howl, then another, and a third. They came from different points, and the sergeant knew that they were not wolves. Scattered in

groups of twos and threes the tribesmen were calling to the others. They had halted and soon they would turn back. Probably this man Koum had killed was their khan—such a fine horse he had. Aye, the Turkomans would be drawing a ring around the sunken grove. Kirdiak tried to remember how many they were—he had seen a score or so. Well, if seven Cossacks rode against them in the open, that would be bad. Worse to hide in the trees, until they were surrounded. He scratched his head and tried to think of a plan.

"Come on, Kirdiak," muttered Koum impatiently. He had been examining the saddle under him, and had found to his satisfaction that it was a good one. "I'll show the way."

"Where?" demanded the sergeant.

"Down the *balka*."

Kirdiak nodded, relieved. He rounded up the five Cossacks who were turning over everything in the camp, looking for more trophies. When they were all in the saddle, tying bundles on their cruppers, he bade Koum lead the way.

"Shut your mouths, lads, and don't fire off your guns."

In single file they trotted out of the wood, into the brush of the ravine. No saddles creaked and no scabbards clacked against the rider's legs. Their figures merged into the obscurity of the ravine. Behind them shaggy heads appeared at the edge of the *balka*, and the howling of the wolves changed to strident calls.

Koum felt his way down to the spot where he had first seen the Turkomans. Here he was sure of his ground, and cantered on through the tall rushes, splashing across the ford. As the Cossacks followed, a dozen muskets flashed from the dunes behind them, and the balls whistled harmlessly overhead. Kirdiak remained to watch the ford with the oldest of the Cossacks, but Koum, after turning into the poplars to pick up his coat and other things, rode on to the knoll where Borchik was stirring up the fire again.

The moon had vanished into haze, and the air had grown cold. A thin mist hung

over the water, and in the east the sky was lightening, before sunrise. The men's faces could be seen under the dark *kalpaks*. Standing about the fire, they talked and laughed excitedly, gazing enviously at the white horse the hunter had brought back with him.

"Eh, Uncle," cried Ostap, "it's a *Kabarda*—a steppe racer. It must have been the khan's."

Koum looked over the horse with satisfaction. It was much better than the one he had lost, although he did not say so. He took off the saddle which was covered with red morocco and ornamented with silver coins. His left arm was dark with dried blood where the Turkoman had slashed the skin.

When he had put a halter on his *Kabarda* and tied the horse with the others, he poured some powder from his horn upon the slash, and bound his torn sleeve around it. Then he glanced up at the sky and yawned.

"Hi, Ostap," he called. "Here's a sword for you, a nice blade. I took it from the khan over yonder but I don't want it."

Stretching himself out in the grass beside the badly wounded Cossack, he put his head on the saddle and pulled his coat over him.

"Ostap," he muttered, "don't let the sergeant take my horse. You lads can watch now, without harm coming of it—"

He was asleep almost at once. The men of the detachment looked admiringly at the shaven head and powerful body of the Zaporoghian who had gone alone, somehow, over the river and had killed the Turkoman khan with a knife by his own tent.

The red sun seemed to leap over the line of the dunes, and the gray surface of the river became tinged with fire. The veil of mist shredded away, and all the uncertain, fantastic shadows of the last hours vanished, revealing only ordinary sand and tamarisk clumps and rock buttes from which a warm red glow grew, and faded into plain daylight. After the night, the wide steppe became quiet and drowsy again.

Kirdiak walked up, with the white haired Cossack, and went straight to his jug, which now lay in its place by his sheepskins.

"Well, lads," he said, "we drove the Turkomans and killed three of them, we took two horses and some other things. We got a knock or two but that's nothing. And as for these omens, you see that the sunset and the cork in the jug meant nothing at all." He glanced around triumphantly. "*Nitchogo*—nothing at all. And now, lads, we'll drink a health or two. No harm now."

He caught up the big jug, frowned, and shook it hastily. Then he jerked out the cork—shook it again close to his ear, and turned it cautiously down. A single drop fell from it.

"As God lives, Father," cried one of the men, "we have not looked at it. Not one of us has gone over to it."

Slowly Kirdiak's brow grew red, and he began to snort. But the other men swore they had not laid hand on it.

"Then it was you, you hedgehog!" he cried at Ostap. "You had the watch."

The young Cossack shook his head.

"How could I, when I was asleep?"

Kirdiak turned on his heel and glared down at Koum snoring gently under his coat.

"May the devil take him! Eight men's rations of brandy he had, down his gullet! The son of a dog is full! Look here, Ostap, I didn't see him cross the river—how did he get over?"

Ostap wiped at the blade of his new saber with a greasy rag.

"Allah knows—I don't. I was asleep when his gun went off—*bong!* I sat up and there were the Turkomans sitting

their horses in the ford. 'To the Father and Son,' said I, and fired my musket. Then I ran back, and you gave command to chase the Turkomans. But I didn't see Koum until—"

"He was drunk, the hog's belly. And if we had not chased the Turkomans he would have left his hide over there."

"But we found him on a horse, a good horse," objected Ostap. "He was all right. He waited and called to us—"

"Well," grumbled Kirdiak, "then he is a wizard."

"Nay." The oldest of the Cossacks came forward with his clay pipe in his hand. He leaned down to pick a burning stick from the fire. "Don't you see, Father, and you brothers? It's not like that at all. Koum changed our luck."

"How—changed our luck?"

The white haired Cossack held the brand to his pipe and puffed.

"The signs—they never lie. Didn't the Turkomans look for us, and look into the blood sunset? And aren't three of them dead before sunrise? Didn't we cork up the jug when it was only half empty? Aye, we did. And we'd all be lying with our toes up, if Koum had not changed the luck by drinking the brandy down. Then didn't he find a wonder of a horse? Look at it!"

Kirdiak looked at the white Kabarda, and said nothing more. But the old Cossack shook his head pensively.

"You're a good officer, eh, Father. You say build a fire here, and go on sentry post there, and charge, lads! That's what an officer should do. But luck settles the thing for us, and that's the end of it."

The listening Cossacks nodded, and a murmur of assent ran around the fire.





*A Story of
the Sea*

PAGE
TWENTY
EIGHT

By F. R. BUCKLEY

"YEAH, here it is," said Mr. Breen, gathering breath for a mighty explosion. "*Bushwahl!*"

A green sea, leapfrogging the forecastle, stumbling on the well deck and gathering reinforcements from a starboard comber as it rushed aft, thudded mightily against the cuddy windows. The steward, framed in the doorway with a tray of coffee, paused and seemed about to lie ceremonially down on the deck which rose to meet him; from the pantry came a slither and crash; the chair at the head of the table, still warm after the captain's hurried exit, rattled violently on its swivel; and the anchovies, breaking anchorage on the moistened tablecloth, actually slid some fifteen or sixteen inches toward the second officer.

Mr. Breen, his eyes still on his newspaper, reached out a long arm, recaptured

them, selected one and proceeded to eat it.

"Can y' imagine?" he demanded. "America's boy friend—Captain Willie Baer. 'Nationally known for his heroic rescue of the crew of the Scandahoofian schooner *Olaf*,' it says. The nerve!"

"I heard him on the radio," said the second officer with his mouth full.

"Yeah," said Mr. Breen. "Me too. With an announcer makin' marine noises in a bucket. I thought I was gonna snap my cookies then, but this beats it. Pipe him wearin' the medal he got for defendin' Pelham Bay. Listen. 'At six bells (three o'clock), says Captain Baer—'"

"How about some of them fish?" asked the second officer hungrily.

Mr. Breen helped himself in nature's way and pushed the depleted tin across.

"— 'Six bells (three o'clock),' " he read on, spitting an anchovy tail into Captain Baer's pictured face, " 'the wireless operator handed me the fateful message.' That's a hot one. Get that, Jenkins. Ho, watchman, what of the night? 'Six bells (three o'clock), Capting, and a fateful message—' an—say. Oh, gee! Here's the bosun!"

Pausing to read, Mr. Breen suddenly delivered himself of a sardonic yell.

"Oh, gee, Jenkins, this is better yet. Here's a tintype of the bosun, with streaks all down his chin where he's chewed snuff, sayin' he hopes it'll make Congress build up the merchant marine. Oh, gee! 'If this brings to the notice of our lawmakers,' says he, an' a lot of boloney, 'the homeric efforts of our men will not have been'—can y' imagine it? A squarehead bosun!"

"Prob'ly got a lot of money for it," said the second officer pessimistically. He was due on watch within ten minutes and felt naturally indulgent toward the deceitfulness of riches. "Shipbuilders an' so on—"

Mr. Breen lowered the paper. His icy blue eye and his long upper lip, the latter the puckered souvenir of a collision with a Marseilles bottle, transferred their scorn from Captain Baer to Mr. Jenkins.

"Yeah," said Mr. Breen bitterly.

"Prob'ly they did. Prob'ly they also got a carton of Buddies each, to smoke any time things got too much for 'em, an' a pot of cold cream to indorse. An' a flannel jacket an' a little red jacket apiece, to wear when they went out with the organ."

"I could do with a thousand bucks," said the second mate, blowing his coffee. "Or a cigaret. Got one?"

"Well, what I can do with," said Mr. Breen, elaborating the theme just announced, "is stayin' a man, an' not makin' any monkey out of myself, thank you. A sailor in the Sunday papers! Like 'n opera singer. Can y' imagine the razz he'll get off everybody he knows? Not a word outa the officer that went with the boat—an' Wooly Baer gettin' time off to go lecture in front of women's clubs. Yeah, right here on another page I saw it."

The second officer arose and reached for his oilskins.

"Yeah, it's tough," he said. "Still, try to bear up, Breeny. You might do somep'n yourself one day—except eat anchovies. Ta-ta."

"Well, if I do—" began the chief officer indignantly; but addressed the end of his sentence perforce to the chief engineer. As Mr. Jenkins left for the icy altitudes of the bridge, Mr. Alastair came heavily in in a sweatshirt.

"I won't go playin' heroes for the Sunday editions," Mr. Breen concluded lamely. "You seen this, Mac?"

"What is't?"

"This."

The engineer cocked one savage eye from his plate.

"Read it tae me," he said in a voice full of comestibles. "Ah'm hurried. Whit the hell's the Auld Man doin', headin' in-tae a hell-Jock-whaur's-ma-kiltie like this?"

"Maybe you'd like to lay aside your oil can," said Mr. Breen, laying aside his own newspaper, "an' run the ship awhile? How'd that be?"

"Better for the ship," said the chief indistinctly. "What were ye gaun to read me? Aboot yon Captain Baer that saved the poor perishin'—"

"Well, what of it?"

"Naething," said Mr. Alastair, waving his fork a brief moment. "Juist what I should ha' expeckit off a deck officer."

Mr. Breen covered a momentary lack of inspiration by rising.

"Oh, yeah?" he asked, gaining possibly five seconds more by being thrown against the buffet as the *Nathan Hale* hell dived.

"Yeah. That's what you got a right to expect. He's your kind of a sailor, Baer is—a dog-rammed son of a gun of a correspondence school navigator runnin' a Hog Island coffee mill."

"Ye're in one of thae yersel'," said Mr. Alastair, stung out of his ragout. "Whit-ever kind of sailor ye are, will I go shut down the engines for ye? What'd ye do then, sae smart?"

"I'd fetch Europe somewhere under jury rig," said Mr. Breen. "I served in sail, I did! I knew ships when it took men to run 'em—men that didn't smoke cigars, neither, an' it took 'em all their time. We didn't go posin' in the—"

"Could I play ye a few bars of music?" asked the chief engineer, preparing to use his fork for a violin.

"You could go to hell!" said Mr. Breen, and took his views and his paper off to bed with him.

He regretted, later, that he had spent so much time in righteous indignation; and may also have wished that his captain had been a little less of the old square-rigger school, and more of that exemplified by Captain Baer. For the indignation had spoiled two solid hours of sleep; and when, drowsy and irritable (his socks had not dried properly, for one thing) Mr. Breen mounted the bridge at eight bells, he found his superior officer quite lamentably disguised in drink. The Second, hovering ghost-like about the binnacle light, seemed to be trying to signal something.

"Nassy weather," said Captain Elways.

He waved an arm, to show which weather, of all the varieties then prevailing on the earth's surface he must be understood to mean by this stricture; and, to

show that he was perfectly sober, seized Mr. Breen by the lapel.

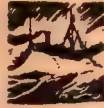
"I say's nassy weather!"

"Yessir."

"What you think it is?" demanded the captain, boring an inflamed eye into Mr. Breen's soul. "You think's a ruddy hurricane, don't you?"

"Nasty hatful of wind, sir. Lump of a sea."

"You wanna reduce speed? You wanna change course. You wanna change course, you dirty, white liver rat. Change course an' put a ship off her course like that lousy Scotch tinker in engineroom. Blowin' on tube. He's drunk, that's what! You're drunk, that's whassa matter with you. All drunk!"



ONE SEA lifted the forefoot of the *Nathan Hale* and held it while another thumped her resoundingly amidships. Taking advantage of which diversion a third wave caught the ship's stern as it ascended spray smoking from the abyss and, by flinging it four points to starboard, hurled Captain Elways prostrate on the wheelhouse floor. He arose in the arms of the second officer, stammering threats and bleeding from a cut across the forehead.

"You lemme see you change the course," he said to Mr. Breen. He wiped his forehead vaguely. "Put the shackles on you. I wanna cup coffee. Leggo me, you— I'm gonna get cup coffee."

He staggered off toward his cabin and the whisky bottle, Mr. Breen, a darker shadow in the blackness, regarding him.

"How's that?" asked the Second in a low voice.

Mr. Breen shrugged.

"No worse'n I've seen you."

"Oh, yeah? Zat so?"

"Yeah. That's so."

"Well, anyhow," said the Second, declining the gambit, "you watch your step, buddy. He's ugly as hell, this bat, an he's gunnin' for you."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Your friend Willie Baer used to ship second with him, an' he's—for cheese's

sake," wailed the speaker, suddenly disentangling himself from an entwinement with the binnacle, the wheel and the steersman, "isn't the drunken dog gonna do anything about this? We'll break our—"

The engineroom whistle shrilled furiously. Into Mr. Breen's ear, sketchily applied to the mouthpiece as the *Nathan Hale* whipped through forty degrees of roll, Mr. Alastair poured agonized representations about tail-shafts.

"Call up the cap'n."

"Whaur is he?"

"Gettin' a cup of cawfee," said Mr. Breen sybillically, "in his cabin."

He hung up, squinted at the compass card, glanced at the intent face of the helmsman and, hands in pockets of his greatcoat, stared into the encircling obscurity at his junior.

"You get off to bed."

"What you gonna do?"

"I'm gonna stand watch," said Mr. Breen, explaining the matter as to an idiot child. "What'ch think I was goin' to do? Go fishin'?"

"You can go swimmin' for all I care," snapped the Second, who had had four hours of storm and Captain Elways himself, and who disliked reminders of intemperance, "and sink."

"And you can go to hell!" roared Mr. Breen to his second shipmate within three hours. "Anyhow, flounce your hide off this bridge."

And that, so to speak, was how things were; all the way to Liverpool; during the stay in Prince's Dock; and for most of the road home in ballast. Possibly the stars had something to do with it—Uranus may have been in Mars, or something was on a cusp or something. Certainly, in the case of Captain Elways, Bacchus was afflicting Neptune to no mean extent; and in that of the chief officer there were signs of unpropitious aspects in Venus and Gemini. It was, in earthly language, in fact the news that Mrs. Breen had presented Mr. Breen with twins, which touched off the scene at the breakfast table.

"Congrats to the proud father!" said

the Second, taking his seat. Having passed a pleasant evening in Lord Street, he felt pityingly tolerant of the domestic clumsinesses. "Atta boy, Breeny! What did they weigh?"

Mr. Breen looked up.

"What did what weigh?" he demanded, knife and fork ominously at rest.

"Why, the twins," said Mr. Jenkins. "The Breen duo. Mike and Ike. Or were they girls—or mixed?"

"Who told you about it?"

"Sparks. He—"

The first mate laid down knife and fork, in such wise that Captain Elways, horrendously confronted by fried eggs, started out of his skin.

"Sparks told you, did he? Well—"

"Aw, shucks, Breen! I only wanted to congratulate you!"

"Thanks. But—"

"Yeah," broke in Captain Elways, "and what the hell's biting you, Mister? Getting too snooty to speak to us, maybe? Any harm in our knowing about this?"

"No, sir." Once again Mr. Breen was suffering from lack of sleep.

Outside his cabin, during all the long night before, a crane with a peculiarly irritating stutter had been unloading bales; inside his head, the probable bills of doctors and nurses and lingerie shops had mixed themselves up with the statistics of puerperal mortality and the protectographed figures of pay checks. And that morning they had sailed.

"Only there happens to be a law about wireless messages bein' secret, an'—"

"An' I suppose you're gonna have Sparks sent to jail?"

"No, sir. Only—"

"Only what?"

Mr. Breen arose.

"I like to mind my own God given business," he said through his teeth; at which the captain rose also.

The steward, bearing Captain Elway's fifth cup of coffee, and the just arriving Mr. Alastair, paused in the doorway, awaiting lightnings.

"And who told you your business was so damn important?" demanded the captain.

"Who are you—J. P. Morgan in disguise? Is it—"

"I'm no advertisin' hound, anyway!"

"I'm talkin', Mister! You start when I'm through! I suppose you're makin' another nasty crack about Baer. Well, Captain Baer's a friend of mine. Now what do you know about that?"

"Nothing."

"Oh, you don't, eh?"

"No, sir."

"Well, then," said Captain Elways with concentrated venom, "then suppose you shut your blasted yap."

He stared his full into his chief's paling face, moved from the head of the table and laid a hand on the Second's shoulder.

"I want to see you in my cabin, Jenkins," he said. "Come up as soon as you're through. Hello, Alastair. Send up more coffee, steward."



HOWEVER, it was not coffee that Captain Elways drank with the second officer, either then or at any of the subsequent lovefeasts to which Mr. Breen was unbidden. The drinking was of whisky; much of it to Mr. Breen's confusion; that officer meantime occupying his watches with complex calculations of the probable living expenses for four. Again—especially during the first days of the crossing, when cabin windows could be open, and toasts could be heard on the bridge—there was much drinking to Captain Willie Baer, that hero of the merchant marine; with wishes that all his detractors might be like him. So much that by the fiftieth parallel of longitude, which the *Nathan Hale* struck in the neighborhood of forty-three north, Mr. Jenkins seemed perpetually drunk; while Captain Elways had passed from an obvious and comparatively innocuous state of shakiness and irritability into that seeming super-sobriety which precedes and aggravates collapse.

This was his condition when in the forenoon of Wednesday, the twelfth, it became obvious that the *Nathan Hale* was about to encounter a snorter. Nothing

could have been more rational than his instructions for the inspection of hatch battening, the tightening of gripes and the fitting of ventilator shutters. Nothing, moreover, could have been friendlier than his manner with Mr. Breen, as he stood on the bridge with him and the second officer, three hours before the storm struck.

The Third, who had come up for a pipe he had mislaid in the charthouse, heard the conversation, and discounted all that Mr. Breen had told him. On his way below he decided, in fact, that the chief officer was nothing but a crab, whereas the Old Man and Jenkins were cheery, friendly souls. By that illogical analogy which dictates most actions of most lives, the Third further decided, while taking off his trousers, that Captain Willie Baer wasn't such a bad skate; and that (he was going to sleep as he thought this) it would be pretty slick to have your picture in the papers and get paid for lecture tours.

"Well, Mister," the captain had said cheerfully. "Looks like another dusting."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, we're pretty snug. The *Auretania* got it yesterday, at fifty-eight—forty-two," said Mr. Elways, scanning a yellow flimsy from the wireless room, "and the *Grace B. Jones* is off Cape Sable—had it forty-eight hours, and still shipping 'em. That means about supertime for us, and a couple of days of it. Guess I'll go down and get a little shut-eye."

"Yes, sir."

"Fwe vnyluck—" observed the second officer, from his position of dependence on a bridge stanchion.

Captain Elways turned upon him.

"What?"

"'F we have any luck," said Mr. Jenkins, hoisting himself upright and beaming capulouly, "maybe Breen can save 'few lives, 'n' be a—boop!—hero 'mself. He-he!"

"You better get some sleep, too, Mister," said the captain coldly. "Never mind about anything else. And it wouldn't do you any harm to lay off the

bottle a bit. Mr. Breen, have me called as soon as anything breaks."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Or four bells, anyhow. 'By."

It was two bells, to be precise, when the steward went down, to find another empty bottle in the washstand and the captain soberer than ever. By eight bells, when Mr. Breen went off watch and the third mate came on, Captain Elways had been facing the spindrift for an hour and forty minutes, but was still genial. He asked the Third who it was that'd sell a farm and go to sea; and laughed heartily at his own joke; Mr. Breen meantime marching off below with the face of a Puritan at an unsatisfactory witch burning. The Third remarked on this, and Captain Elways established an additional reputation for wisdom and broad mindedness.

"Well, you take warning by him," said the master, with a gentleness due to a new strange feeling of nausea and giddiness. "Don't criticize your superiors. Breen's all right in his—"

He paused, and as a peculiar roaring—not that of the wind—developed in his ears, said that he'd just pop out on the outer bridge wing and take a look-see. It was from this position, and while a prickling numbness not ascribable to cold invaded his feet and hands, that the captain sighted the *City of Mhow*. She was—or had been—a British freighter of some two thousand tons, Cardiff to Montreal with coal. At the moment, she was a rusty piece of flotsam which, having drifted rudderless and engineless for two days; lay broad on the *Hale's* starboard bow; her stem and stern taking turns at sea dictated stabs at the thunderous sky; a rag that had once been an ensign tattering desperately at her stern.

"Hi!" shouted Captain Elways, and grabbed binoculars out of the box under the rail.

Now, in point of fact there was no one aboard the *City of Mhow*. A starvation boat dating from 1900, and owned by a firm of Merseyside Yorkshiremen, she had obligingly kicked off her propeller and rudder simultaneously at the very begin-

ning of the storm, and when the *Volumnia* was within seventeen miles. At the moment when Captain Elways brought his glasses to bear on her decks, her master, officers and crew were accordingly far on their Cunard way to Boston, eating their second or third full meal since Swansea and talking largely to passengers about the perils of the deep. Which made little or no difference to Captain Elways. He could distinctly see men—lots of men; dozens of them—on the freighter's decks; so many men, and perched in such peculiar positions about the rails, that when the *Mhow* dived out of sight into a wave trough, he yelled with the terror that fifty or sixty of them would be swept off by the boarding seas.

The yell brought the third mate staggering to his side, to whom he explained hoarsely, as the tramp swung upward once more into sight, that there were dozens of poor fellows drowning before their eyes—all, he might have added, in full evening dress and wearing red top hats. Unfortunately, he did not add this. Merely, before his jaws started their queer and uncontrollable chattering he ordered the Third to go rouse out the first and second mates, and for heaven's sake get a boat launched.

Which, in the order named, his oilskins flapping loudly down the alleyways, his innocent blue eyes ablaze with excitement, the Third proceeded to do.



MR. JENKINS reached the bridge first.

He had the advantage of having turned in in his clothes; and the additional advantage, from a social point of view, of being able to see anything the captain saw, or at least to take the captain's word for it. After one glance through the binoculars, whose lenses were frosted by sea salt into a state of complete opacity, he turned, for instance, muttering "Poor guys!" and suggested No. 4 boat as the logical one to launch. The fact that No. 4 had previously been picked up by a sea and torn out of its gripes, and was then lying in full

view and in splinters on the boat deck, was nothing to Mr. Jenkins. He hugged a stanchion and said they must ask for volunteers.

"I'll go, sir," he said, making a movie inspired but inaccurate pass at his cap, "and any guy that won't follow me is a white livered skunk. A disgrace to his country. I—"

"Gimme them glasses," said a rusty voice at his ear; and Mr. Breen, oilskinned but hatless, proceeded to take stock of the situation.

He perceived at once—or at least as soon as he had cleared the rime from the binoculars—that the *Mhow* was deserted; her masts were intact, yet there was no one in the crow's nest to watch or signal for aid; the halyards of the reversed ensign had been cast off—probably the last act of some one who had meant to haul it down, and had had to drop work and run for the rescue boat; and moreover by the taffrail lay five or six cork jackets, obviously discarded before their owners jumped. It was as plain as print—and Mr. Breen had been lugged out of a comparatively warm cabin in his underwear. He wanted to know why the hell, and asked Mr. Jenkins.

At least, he turned to, and fired his query at, the spot where Mr. Jenkins had been. Mr. Jenkins having hurried unsteadily forward in search of heroes, Mr. Breen actually came face to face with his captain, now violently red about the eyes and with an expression therein which would have interested several pscopaths.

"What the hell—"

"Are you talking to me, Mister?"

"No—yes—"

A sea smote the *Nathan Hale* abroad-side, and green water flung the captain into the mate's arms.

"You call me 'sir'!" he shouted, pushing himself frantically away. "An' I'll tell you what it's about, Mister. We're gonna pull those birds off that wreck. What did you think we were gonna do?"

"There's nobody aboard her."

"What?"

Mr. Breen considered Captain Elways

narrowly. Not for nothing had he spent four years in the China Sea, where the master who has a ticket is a rarity, and the weather is hot, and whisky sells in free ports for twenty cents a bottle.

"I say there's nobody aboard her." He spoke as mildly as one can in a sixty mile gale; as a saber tooth tiger might reason with its young. "Optical illusion, sir!"

"You damned—" said Captain Elways, his fingers curling.

"Let Brown have a look," said the mate, making to hand the glasses to the Third.

They were snatched out of his hand and flung overboard.

"I'll do all the seeing that's done on this ship!" screamed the captain. "As for you, you mutinous—"

He advanced, his crooked fingers closing irresolutely into fists. A broad hand on his chest, Mr. Breen pushed him gently back.

"Even if there was anybody aboard," said the chief officer, "this is no sea—launch—boat! *Couldn't launch boat, you drunken— Drown all men—savvy?*"

Captain Elways had just fifteen seconds to spare before passing from his then condition to what the case books describe as the stage of acute mania. He employed them by pointing out to Mr. Breen that Jenkins had already asked for volunteers and—judging by the procession which was staggering aft from the forecastle under the steady batter of green seas, obtained them; that what man had done—Captain Willie Baer, for example—man could do; and that if the men were willing to go, it wouldn't do for an officer to show his white liver in public.

"I'm not going," roared Mr. Breen, "an'—no more are they!"

As the first volunteer—the boatswain—came up the ladder, he turned and made gestures for the rightabout. And while the boatswain, willing to obey but pushed vigorously from behind by Mr. Jenkins, hesitated open mouthed on the top step, Captain Elways went completely mad. At first he made a rush toward the chart-

house, possibly with some confused idea about firearms; changing his mind, he halted, spun about and smashed his right fist savagely into the first mate's face.

"Jenkins! Get—men—boat! I'll fix this dirty, lousy—"

He crouched, staggering at the knees as the *Nathan Hale* rolled under the onslaught of the waves; his fists working spasmodically in front of his chest.

"You keep those men back," said Mr. Breen conversationally. Though his lip was cut almost to the nostril, and blood was running down his chin to be blown in flying ruffles off the collar of his oilskin coat, he paid no attention to Captain Elways.

"You commandin' here?" Jenkins sidled past the boatswain and stood steadily now, his right fist clenched and held at the level of his hip.

"I'm not gonna have men drowned because you drunks want to make the Sunday—" said Mr. Breen levelly; and then in a roar. "Ah, would you?"

Certainly Mr. Jenkins would have; he would have uppercut the first mate just about an inch to the right of the point of the jaw and laid him away to the bridge planking; but he missed. He caught, to be sure, the underside of Mr. Breen's nose and lifted it, and the cartilage therewith connected, into a new, permanent and not unattractive position; but he failed of his objective and took the consequences.

The consequences were two—a left to the stomach and a right which caught Mr. Jenkins squarely on the cheekbone. He spun around, grabbed at the boatswain, who stepped aside; missed a wild clutch at the handrail of the bridge ladder, and next moment was picking himself up, dazed and sick, from the deck below. He also picked up a belaying pin which should not have been adrift anyway, and the instant after was bolting up the ladder again. He wished to murder Mr. Breen, presently at grips with four men of similar views.

Naturally, of these the captain made one, though by no means the most deadly.

Indeed, it would be but just to say that the third officer, despite his youth and his ignorance of the deeper sea methods of battle, was the most unpleasant of the adversaries; he was strong and enthusiastic and it was he who had brought into the fight the cook—the boatswain was standing pointedly against the starboard rail, looking on—and the other man. It was he, furthermore, who, when Captain Elways climbed on Mr. Breen's chest, improved the shining hour by inserting two of his fingers into the mate's right eye and pushing; to which deed, to do him justice to the uttermost, he had been inspired by a singularly painful kick. Sea-boots may be made of rubber, but they can hurt when applied to the kneecap; and there had also been the matter of an elbow in Mr. Brown's throat.

"You—" came out of the *mêlée* in a fore-castle voice; and the cook arose, holding his jaw in both hands. It was, as the Brooklyn doctor later pointed out to a clinic, not so much broken as crushed; and then of course there was the double dislocation and the displacement of four molars; a most interesting case, which seemed to lack attraction for the cook.

He sat down on the deck to port and tried to swear or spit his teeth out; paying no attention whatever to which, nor to Mr. Jenkins' earnest seeking for an opening, Mr. Breen continued diligent in his business. Captain Elways, surprised by a knee in the groin, suddenly drew up his legs, turned death white, and writhed, in four or five motions, from one side of the bridge to the other; a feat assisted by the roll of the ship. No such adventitious aids assisted the third mate in surpassing this record. While Mr. Breen rested a moment from his efforts, Mr. Brown arose and prepared to stamp on the chief officer's face; and if, struck in the lower stomach by Mr. Breen's other boot, he happened to fall on top of the captain and the cook, he did so against the roll of the ship—a vicious roll which filled the forward well deck and spoiled Mr. Jenkins' smash at the base of the first mate's skull.

Having cheerily left his enemy for dead,

the second mate had indeed barely got his remaining volunteers to the falls before Mr. Breen was once more in a vertical position, obviously uncertain which were his hands and which his feet, but evidently determined that the boat should not be launched.

"Stay away!" said Mr. Jenkins.

He had laid aside the belaying pin, but now he picked it up again and waggled it. His eyes aflame, he was shouting something which—all but a few words—fell between the wind and Mr. Breen's damaged intellect, and was lost.



WAVING the volunteers out of the way, Mr. Breen took a long breath and rushed him.

There was now — and Mr. Breen knew it—no longer a question of a fight properly so called; it was a question either of Jenkins' once getting home properly with that pin, or of his falling bodily upon Jenkins and savaging him into insensibility. It was necessary to take a couple of bone cracking blows on the fore-arms, and another on the left shoulder; a fourth smash was whistling through the air toward his temple, when he lashed out blindly with his sea boot. This seemed to double Mr. Jenkins up in such a position that it was easy to drive a knee up against his nose.

It was now — as the second mate changed his mind and shot over backwards—that Mr. Breen carried out his original plan. Of falling. Since his weight was one hundred and ninety pounds, and since he fell with his elbow in Mr. Jenkins' solar-plexus, this more or less settled matters; though what matters (rising to find the boatswain reflectively wiping blood off the belaying pin) the chief officer could not at the moment recollect. He turned several times around in his tracks, stared at the boatswain, the boat which was to have been launched, and the two survivors of those who should have manned it; and remembered.

"Ur," said Mr. Breen, additionally gazing down at his recumbent subordinate. "Well. Thassat."

He looked at the sea, whose obvious desire to stand up on end was frustrated only by a wind which, increasing steadily in force, was planing off the tops of the waves and driving the shavings like buck-shot across the *Nathan Hale*. Now drifted well astern, the *City of Mhow* rolled with desperate abandon in the murk.

The boatswain touched Mr. Breen's arm and pointed to her. He was a family man, the boatswain—indeed he was several family men; and esteemed life and death to be much of a muchness. Live heroes got medals, and dead ones didn't have to explain things to the French police; whereas on the other hand there was beer in Brooklyn at a place where the *smorgasbord* wasn't so bad. It was therefore with complete impartiality that the boatswain raised his eyebrows in question.

"No!" said Mr. Breen.

A violent pitch, catching his rather shaky knees off-balance, flung him against the wireless house; he clutched the hand-rail.

"Nobody aboard," he explained to the other two men; and blew blood from his lips. "No Sunday supplements."

His one rather wild eye (the other was invisible) rolled to the bridge and thence to the boatswain.

"Who's on watch?" he demanded; and remembered. "Where's Mr. Brown?" And remembered some more. And staggered on to the bridge and selected Mr. Brown from the heap comprising additionally Captain Elways (now stirring feebly) and the cook; and kicked him severely and stood him up against the charthouse bulkhead.

"I'm in command now," said Mr. Breen. "Hear me? Captain's gone nuts. Hear me, I say?"

Mr. Brown nodded feebly and tottered to the starboard forward rail.

"You stay up with him," said Mr. Breen to the boatswain. "I'm goin' down to clean up. Have those others fetch Mr. Jenkins in outa the wet. And take cookie below. Fix him up later."

"Yessir. What about the cap'n, sir?"

"Take him to his cabin. D.T's. If he kicks up, we'll slap the shackles on him. I'm takin' command. My responsibility. 'S incompetent."

"Yessir."

"An' call down to the engine room," added Mr. Elways' successor breathlessly. "Tell 'em—reduce speed. Ten revolutions. Half speed. Tell Alastair to ease her. How's she heading?"

He bled painstakingly over the compass, and stared uncomprehendingly at the windward sea.

"Head her up two points," he growled at the helmsman; and walked slowly and unsteadily toward his room.

Where he was not allowed to remain even for the time it would have taken to bandage himself. Captain Elways, coming to full consciousness and finding a revolver in a drawer, emerged to resume command. Fifteen minutes had passed into eternity, and two bullets through the fullness of Mr. Breen's oilskins before the irons could be brought and affixed on Mr. Elways. While the latter raved, out of the growing dusk came a steamer, riding to a sea anchor and apparently oblivious that she was drifting as fast as she could ordinarily steam.

There was some quick work dodging her and her hawser; followed by a complete nervous collapse on the part of the third mate. He wept on Mr. Breen's shoulder, and when pushed away went and wept over the bridge rail; and, the weather having turned cold, the tears froze so that he was useless as a lookout, and Mr. Breen had to stay on the bridge while Mr. Brown went below and slept. Indeed, the boatswain spelling him for the minimum necessary intervals, he stayed on the bridge—twelve hours more of the storm, and one day's steaming, and from Ambrose Light to Quarantine—for forty-seven hours thereafter; and awoke to find the *Nathan Hale* motionless, and himself under the pucker eyed gaze of Captain Esdras Miller; which startled him. Captain Miller was seventy-eight and an atheist; and he owned the Patriot Line.

"Well?" he asked.

Mr. Breen sat up. It was not Captain Miller's habit to come out to Quarantine. He could make himself plentifully unpleasant at the dock.

"Well, sir, it's a long—"

"I know what *happened*. Elways got drunk and so did Jenkins—wanted to make fools of themselves, and you took charge. I want to know how you got away with it. Break anything? Anybody hurt that could sue?"

"No, sir. But how—"

"Wireless. Operator. Off his own bat. Said he'd told somebody about a message of yours or somep'n. Trying to make up."

"I wish," said Mr. Breen, "he'd mind his own business."

Captain Miller laughed. He sounded something like a police dog making known his intention to bite, but his intention was friendly. It was just that he came from Maine.

"Glad you minded yours," he said; and nursed his knee. "Elways bin readin' about this Captain Baer?"

"Yes, sir. Guess so."

"Yeah," said Captain Miller. "Well, he's fired."

He nursed his knee some more.

"You got ticket?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I can't give you this ship," said Captain Miller. He could have phrased it differently, and produced quite another effect; but he came from Maine, a State of which Mr. Breen had little knowledge. "Seniority. You can have the *Button Gwinnett*."

That lousy tub, thought Mr. Breen; shoved at a guy like a charity handout. After all this.

"Well? Want her?"

"Yes, sir. Er—thanks."

Captain Miller arose.

"Hear you got twins. Congratulations. Times are hard, or I'd start a little bank account for 'em. Later."

Yeah. Next February thirtieth.

"An' meantime," said the owner, unwitting his beneficiary's thoughts, "you can take my boat an' go see 'em. I'll look after things down here. Better stop at a

drug store an' get your face fixed. Frighten the wife. Goodby."



IT WAS a miserable journey home. The boat, heading through a cold mist toward the terminal docks, passed the anchored ship of Captain Willie Baer—a vast, sleek liner which could have used the *Nathan Hale* for a tender, and the *Button Gwinnett* for a steam launch. Then the druggist hurt like hell, and in the subway a pallid man with glasses stepped with what seemed twice his weight on Mr. Breen's worst corn. At 125th Street it was raining; the four flights up to the apartment smelled distressingly like the galley of the *Nathan Hale*; and despite the efforts of the Brooklyn pharmacist, Mrs. Breen burst into tears at the sight of her husband.

"Aw, don't," said the returning one, patting her on the back. "Lay off, will you?"

Obediently, she wiped her eyes.

"Well, you got a ship, anyhow," she said through the handkerchief. "Captain Miller called up. I'm so—"

"Did he tell you what it was?"

"No."

"It's the *Gwinnett*," said Mr. Breen, sitting down and proceeding to take off his boots. His soul overflowed. "A dirty, blunt ended dynamited gory sketch of a canal boat—"

"It's a command, Jim."

"Yeah. More responsibility and no more pay. How's the kids?"

They were well, and he tried to be nice about them; but the iron had entered into his soul, and it honestly did seem to him that the starboard twin was cock eyed. Nothing could please him; not even the T-bone steak procured at vast expense as a celebration.

"A damn advertisin' dog like that Baer guy—" he said anent this and several other things; meaning that Captain Baer had steaks every day, walked on carpets without holes in them, and was childless. Finally, while Mrs. Breen went to stir—and weep into—the gravy, he settled him-

self in the one armchair with a sulky expression and the New York *Morning Mail*.

Somebody had, of course, shot somebody on Page 1; somebody else was predicting the end of the dry régime; and a third party was proposing a pact to end war. Turning to the second page, Mr. Breen found more about all of these matters; while Page 3 gave him interesting information about bird life in the Adirondacks and the prospects for a business recovery in 1932. Page 4 proved that bank failures were the work of one Fedor Alessandrovitch Rodovski, acting under the orders of the Moscow government, and gave sidelights on the love life of the common or bribe taking magistrate; and other sheets continued likewise.

Up to Page 28, which dealt with shipping news, and was headed by a map. There, across the jaundiced vision of Mr. Breen, steamed the numbered ghosts of the tall ships—the *Majestic*, the *Leviathan*, the *Paris*, and *Tuscania*; commanded by gold braided men who gave interviews to reporters.

Mr. Breen sneered at them and went lower. High tide at Governor's Island would occur twice in the ensuing twenty-four hours; mariners were warned of dredging operations—and about floating wreckage—certain ships were sailing Monday, others Tuesday; some had reported their positions by wireless, and still others had arrived. Down at the extreme foot of Column 8—just above the statement that this paper was printed by union labor—two lines caught Mr. Breen's eye.

A moment later he was in the kitchen. Mrs. Breen turned to find herself married to quite a new man, in no way resembling the grim one who had come home. His eyes were shining; his hair appeared to be endeavoring to stand up on his head and give three cheers; his rather tobacco discolored teeth were displayed in a magnificent grin, and with one horny thumb he was indicating an item in an excessively disheveled paper. Just above the thumb, Mrs. Breen read "Arrivals," and that the information, in order given, was name of ship, nationality, port of origin, destina-

tion, cargo and master. Just below it, and in type so small as to be hardly readable under the smoke dimmed kitchen light, was:

Nathan Hale (Am.) L'pool 30th. To Bush
Terminal in ballast. J . . .

She peered up at her husband, who immediately dropped the paper, seized her around the waist and kissed her. He kissed her on one cheek, and then, though a piece of adhesive tape came loose and flapped into his eye, kissed her unprecedentedly on the other. Nay, more; taking her into a pair of ursuline arms and kicking her painfully on the ankle, he dragged her into what seemed to be his notion of a dance.

"What the hell d'you know about

that?" chanted Mr. Breen gaily. "Tra-la-la! Tra-la-la! I'll—"

"What?" gasped Mrs. Breen, trying distractedly to keep the cooking fork out of his eye.

He dropped her at once, stared incredulously, and grabbed up the discarded *Morning Mail*.

This time, his thumb was not quite so inaccurate in indicating what he wished read; and at the end of the paragraph she had seen before, Mrs. Breen now perceived the additional words:

J. Breen (act'g)

"Didn't you *see*?" demanded J. Breen, acting rapturously. "Mamma! My name's in the paper!"



FOREST FIRE

By

JOHN C. FROHLICHER

A red eyed witch in the woods today.
Her gray-blue hair
Is snaking up the gullies
On wind twisted air;
Her hot and fetid breath,
Her fangs of flaming gold
Are poisoning the forest,
Turning hillsides old;
Old with graying skeletons
Of dead trees standing there—
The dread witch of the timber
With her long, floating hair.

The WHISTLING KILLER

By GEORGE E. HOLT



A Story of Morocco

THE American vice-consul at Arzila was knee deep in a morass of trouble; the bright gleam of his honorable office had suddenly faded, leaving him in a somewhat terrified gloom which even the protective colors of his country's flag failed to relieve.

To begin with, Kane Courtney was very young, which is both a great strength and a severe weakness—at times. He was inexperienced both in consular affairs and in that great dark continent of Africa

which lay at his back. Soon after he had arrived at his post of duty in the little Moroccan coast town of Arzila, on the rough Atlantic seaboard, his superior officer, Consul Willoughby, had gone on leave to London, leaving him in a rosy glow of pleasure at being the highest—and only—American representative in Arzila. Then a million busy *djinnoons* had swarmed in on the African wind to make trouble for him, to persecute him, in the manner of evil spirits the world over—

and had quickly brought him to the apogee of distress by causing Mr. Martin Stanhope, the only American resident of Arzila, to be found quite dead with a native knife in his vitals.

Vice-consul Courtney absolutely refused to believe the news, which was brought before daylight by a breathless and frightened native servant of the late Mr. Stanhope. It simply wasn't possible. Why, he had dined with Stanhope at the British consul's house the night before! And—so the young man felt, quite absurdly, of course, but quite naturally—Stanhope had shown absolutely no indications of intending to be found dead within twelve hours.

Kane Courtney was young, his nervous system had not yet been polished by the years so that events and impressions slid across it without too much friction. Moreover, he was one of those blessed unfortunates who, through a true sixth sense, possess the rare ability to visualize his thoughts. Or, more precisely, he lacked the ability not to visualize his thoughts, which is more than frequently a curse. Wherefore Mr. Martin Stanhope, lying dead in his chamber, rose like Banquo's ghost and stalked before Kane Courtney in the very flesh.

Twice the stage set itself in Courtney's mind for the reappearance of Mr. Stanhope.

The first time it showed the consular offices, yet strange to him, a few days after his own arrival. He heard a deep mellow voice telling the interpreter that Mr. Stanhope desired to see the vice-consul. The voice rasped on Courtney's nerves; it was too mellow—he hesitated for the right word, found it—too oratorical. The sort of voice one hears on public rostrums, from politicians, reformers and their ilk; the sort of voice which inherently went with the words "ladies and gentlemen" or "my friends."

Instantly he conjured up a picture of the man behind the voice, ordered that he be brought in, found that his picture was not far wrong.

Martin Stanhope was tall and broad,

chesty, with a carriage somewhat ponderous, a manner which would have been impressive if it had not been overdone just that trifle which spoils impressiveness. Not quite natural, not quite unconscious. The vice-consul took in the shock of hair which had once been sandy, perhaps red, was now whitening; the short, thin line of the lips; the eyes which were buttons of hard gray ice. His hand touched Stanhope's, was repelled by the cold moisture of the man's skin, the glimpse of the coarse red hair on the hand's back.

But a vice-consul was a public official; this man was an American; Courtney inquired how he might serve his visitor, asked him to be seated.

"No," replied the deep voice. "No, thanks. I can remain but a moment. I was passing by and, having heard that we had a new member of the American colony, namely yourself—" he smiled, showing his teeth, but his eyes did not smile; they were boring into Courtney's—"I called to pay my respects, sir."

Oratory. Men didn't speak that way, unless they had set about acquiring "good English". And very oddly, for a split second, Kane Courtney's inner vision showed him a picture of a very different man indeed—a lined face, with clenched jaw and no lips to speak of, eyes narrowed to slits through which gleamed gray ice, and a hairy hand which reached out to seize.

"Oh, thanks a lot," he said, the picture dying. "Probably we'll see each other often. Only three, four other Americans in all Morocco. You and I are alone in this district. Anything I can do—" He hadn't thought then that the next thing he should do for Martin Stanhope would be to take charge of his body and effects.

"Thank you, sir," Stanhope said. "I appreciate your courtesy. Although I do not think—" There had been a perceptible pause there, and the icy eyes had seemed to see a distant image before they again met Courtney's gaze. "I do not think I shall have to bother the consulate very much. I bid you good day, sir."

He bowed, turned, made heavy progress from the room. Courtney watched him go. Too much—everything. As Stanhope turned through the doorway the sun struck his hairy left hand and was broken up by the jewels in two rings he wore. Too much jewelry. And abruptly Courtney remembered that there was no ring on Stanhope's right hand.

Later Courtney had asked the consul about Stanhope. Consul Willoughby yawned, shrugged, lighted a cigaret before he answered the question.

"Stanhope? I take it you don't like him. Well, can't say I'd pick him for a playmate myself. But he grades pretty high as run of the mill stuff. Tends to his own business and doesn't make trouble for the consulate. Lived here quite a while. Made his pile, I'm told, in the real estate business. Chicago. Some suburb he developed."

That, thought Kane Courtney, accounts for the voice. And the cold gray eye probably sold a lot of real estate to weak spined people.

"Naturally—" Consul Willoughby grinned—"having made his pile, he didn't care to stay in Chicago. Tried Europe, he said. Didn't like it. People too jumpy. Doesn't want a lot of friends, either. Likes to live alone. Shoots. Rides. Has a fine home on Mount Washington. Spends a lot of money. A bit ostentatious, of course. Sometimes—" the consul hesitated—"sometimes I'm afraid he's going to try to sell me real estate." He laughed.

"His eyes, you mean," offered Courtney. "I get you. I think he'd be a bad actor in a business deal, or in a fight. And I'm not afraid of eyes, either."

Shortly thereafter the consul had gone away and Courtney was left in charge of the consulate.

Time had passed, and then, on the night before the day that was—the day that Martin Stanhope lay dead with a knife in his body—he had seen the man again at the dinner party given by the British consul. Fortunately there had been such a large number of guests that

Courtney had not had to come much in contact with him. And of this he was glad; for he liked Martin Stanhope no more in evening dress, which the man wore well, than he had in business clothes. And besides, there were present more important personages than the American vice-consul, and to these Stanhope turned most of his attention.

One thing, however, Courtney observed with some curiosity. Stanhope was nervous. There were people whom he had not met before—a party of Englishmen who had arrived late—and when Stanhope was introduced Courtney chanced to be nearby. It was the change in the man's voice which caught his attention. Short and choppy. Not oratorical. Not at first. Then it had become so. But Courtney had watched the big man with the red haired hands; had been startled by the look which he had turned upon each man in turn, as he was presented. And when Stanhope turned away, Courtney saw him slyly wipe his hands upon his handkerchief as though they were damp.

But the vice-consul knew his own tendency to imagine things which weren't true, and so put it out of his mind, or almost out. But later in the evening he saw Stanhope furtively watching one of the Englishmen—one who used American slang and told all and sundry that he had learned it ranching out in Montana, you know.

Even after these moving pictures had come and gone—or perhaps because of them—Courtney could not believe that Martin Stanhope was dead. That realization came only after a ride out to the house where Stanhope had lived, a suddenly repugnant visit to the master's chamber (with the faces of native servants wearing odd and undecipherable expressions) in an atmosphere which had taken on a condition of vague menace, a long breathless stare at the chalky face of the former master of the house—and a very quick view of a brass knife hilt protruding from the body . . .

And now Courtney's likes and dislikes

were completely submerged by the sense of his duties in the matter. As his nation's only representative in Arzila, the lives and interests of all Americans residing there were his responsibility. Under the law he had magisterial powers; Morocco was an extraterritorial country, where foreign residents were responsible only to their own national laws, not to the somewhat eccentric and distinctly strange laws of the still half barbarous natives. And for this reason the problems raised by the murder of Martin Stanhope were automatically placed in the hands of young Mr. Vice-consul Courtney.

They were a parcel which would have worried even an experienced consular officer; to Courtney they were a staggering burden.

He must hold inquest; he must attend to the burial of the dead; he must take over and administer property, probate the will, if any; he must investigate the murder and bring the criminal to the bar of justice over which he would sit as judge. Such was the law as it ran in Morocco. Of course the native government would, or might, try to be helpful. But foreigners weren't popular; the death of one of them was nothing to complain to Allah about; the basha, or governor, of the district would be chiefly interested, the vice-counsul knew, in preventing him from bringing to justice any native who might be guilty. And of course it was a native: that was apparant from the use of the curved knife, the nature of the stroke which had ended Stanhope's life, and the fact that no foreigner—American or otherwise—had entered the Stanhope house on the fatal night, as the native servants agreed.



COURTNEY, during the day following the discovery of the murder, performed his duties. A Spanish doctor sojourning in Arzila performed an autopsy, and rendered the obvious decision that Martin Stanhope came to his death as the result of a *kumiah* having been thrust upward into his abdomen, the long knife penetrating

the heart and bringing instant demise. There was, the doctor had volunteered to add, no evidence whatsoever that the man had killed himself in this native manner, but quite a lot of evidence of a struggle preceding the fatal blow. Murder, in short.

Vice-consul Courtney thanked him, paid him and proceeded to examine the house, particularly the death chamber. Hurried preparations for burial were being made. In hot Africa funerals are quite prompt, and this was July. He inventoried the property, sealed certain rooms with the consular seal, interviewed the servants.

There were five native servants. Three for the management of the house; two for the stables, where Stanhope had kept a number of fine horses. The stable men had been in the stables, where they belonged, awaiting their master's return from the British consul's. Two of the house men had left the house on the fatal night immediately after their work was done—which was to say, about eight o'clock—and their master had not then returned.

The remaining servant, who had acted more or less as a personal attendant for Stanhope, said that his master had returned from the British consul's, turned his horse over to the stable men, come into the house, gone to the library, and had ordered a whiskey and soda, which had been served him. The master, when the drink was being served, had told the servant that he expected visitors immediately—two men who were departing early in the morning for Mogador, where they were to purchase some horses for him. Yes, the men had come, three of them instead of two. Natives, yes. None of whom was known to the house servant. After perhaps ten minutes two had gone away. When he had shown them out he had returned to the library. The third man was still there. No, he had overheard no conversation. The master had then told him that he would not be longer needed, to go to bed; he, the master, would let his other visitor out. Where-

upon the servant, Abdeslem Zaudi, had gone to his quarters.' That 'was all he knew, except that he had heard somebody go forth shortly afterward; he supposed it was the third man. No, he did not know what time it was; he had been asleep, had been awakened by a whistling noise.

There was no evidence of robbery, although of course something might have been stolen without a trace. Only Allah could know that. But robbery alone had not been the motive, for there was much money in various drawers in the library.

Vice-consul Courtney returned to his office to think.

"I need help on this," he thought. "I'm too devilish new to this layout. Shall I ask the British consul to help me out? Gosh, I wish there was at least one other American in the district whom I could call on."

At that moment Ibn-Atwil, the native interpreter, entered the room with a handful of mail.

"Look here, Ibn-Atwil," said Courtney. "I'm—I'm up against it. Know what that means, do you?"

"Oh, yes, sidi; yes, indeed. 'And in what matter are you impinging your person against some object which you have not specified?'"

"This Stanhope business," replied Courtney, managing to keep a straight face. Ibn-Atwil was weak on American slang, but he was wise in the ways of Morocco and the consulate. "What's the proper procedure? I know that, as a consular official, I have judicial jurisdiction. But, do I act alone, or what?"

"The Treaty of London," replied Ibn-Atwil, "and the State Department regulations, require that in cases of great heinousness, the consul associate with himself some other American citizen of the district. Such a personage may be residential to the district or merely a way-faring traveler. He must, however, serve when requested."

"Huh! Like our jury system, eh?"

"So I believe, Sidi Consul," assented Ibn-Atwil.

"But what if there is no other American in the district?" questioned Courtney.

"Then you would be permitted to request one of some other nationality. But—but I believe, sidi, that there is an American here. One who arrived but now from the south, a traveler. The brother of your guard, Utair, is a servant at the Hotel Español, and from Utair's lips I learned what I have said."

"Well, then, go get him. Two heads will at least share responsibility—and maybe he knows more about this country than I do. Go get him. Bring him hither, dead or alive. No, better make it alive," he added, smiling at thought of what his interpreter's precise and unimaginative mind might do.

Ibn-Atwil departed, in company with the guard Utair. In the courtyard of the Hotel Español he found the man he sought, a man who was very busy preparing a small caravan for departure northward to Tangier. Mr. Bode listened restlessly; and when the interpreter's involved demand was completed he shook his head.

"Can't be done, friend. I'm due to catch a boat from Gibraltar Saturday. I've got to catch it. Business. Important business. My regards to the consul, but tell him he'll have to get somebody else."

He proceeded with his work. But Ibn-Atwil was not to be trifled with.

"The law, my sir," he said, impressively, "requires that you serve; requires the consul my master to request you to serve; requires, moreover, of me, that I see to it that you do serve. It is not within conceivability that you refuse. It is the law. And I have a strong guard with me to make expeditionary my efforts."

Mr. Bode stopped his work, flushed a bit, squinted at this impossible fellow.

"You telling me that if I don't want to go you'll take me? That it?"

The interpreter bowed.

"My most thanks," he said, "for so plainly stating the truth of the situation."

He stared back at Mr. Bode. Utair,

the guard, advanced a pace and stared likewise. For a moment Mr. Bode gazed speculatively at the ground; then, with a laugh, he capitulated.

"All right," he said. "Lead on, Macduff."

"My name," said the interpreter, "is Jaim Ibn-Atwil, sir." He led the way with Mr. Bode, the guard at their heels.

Thus it was that Mr. Allison Bode was shown into Courtney's office a few minutes later.

Allison Bode was fairly young, excellently dressed, most polite.

"You—ah—sent for me, I take it, Mister Consul," he said, shaking the hand that Courtney offered. "Got in from El Araiche this morning, overland. Going right on to Tangier, I guess. Arzila doesn't seem to be much of a place. And may I ask why I have been—ah—kidnapped, as it were, by a couple of bashas from your office?"

Vice-consul Courtney studied the other's clean shaven, well formed face, the cool blue eyes, the white hands with a simple gold monogram ring on one of the fingers. He was pleased by the clean white ducks Mr. Bode affected, by the lack of jewelry save for the ring and a small pearl in the black necktie. He liked Mr. Bode's voice and his laugh. His coolness. Yes, he would detain Mr. Bode for a day or two. Would Mr. Bode have a cigaret?

Swiftly he told his visitor what had taken place.

"And under the law," he said, "I have the right to summon to my aid any American in my district. Of course, you see what I'm up against; maybe you'll help me out for a few days without—with-out—"

"Without an official command, eh?" Mr. Bode laughed pleasantly, drew on his cigaret. "Well, I wanted to get to Tangier to catch the *Berlin* for New York on Saturday. This is Tuesday, isn't it?"

"One day's ride will take you to Tangier. I promise to let you get away Friday morning," offered the vice-consul.

Mr. Bode shrugged, pondered, spoke.

"All right, Mister Consul," he said.

"I'm under your orders. But it's lunch time. Suppose you have luncheon with me at the Hotel Español; it's not as bad as it might be."

"Go ahead," Courtney told him. "I've got a couple of men to see; take me ten, fifteen minutes. You go along; I'll follow."

"I," said Mr. Bode, "will walk down to the shop and get some cigarets. Pick you up on my return, eh? Ten minutes?"

Courtney nodded assent, and summoned his interpreter. He was greatly relieved.

"That American," he confided to his man, "was sent by Allah at the right time. I need moral support. I need the sound of an American voice. Now—"

"All things are sent by Allah, sidi," offered the interpreter. "The one of whom I spoke to you this morning is here. Sidi Hajeeb."

"Sidi Hajeeb? Oh, yes, I remember. The consul told me about him. He saved the consul's bacon once, didn't he? Recovered a stolen code, or something of the sort?"

"Twice he has served us with ponderous efficiency," replied Ibn-Atwil. "He has a particularly razored mind, sir. His astuteness is truly astounding."

"All right then, let's have him in. A razored mind is indicated."

The interpreter salaamed and went out. Returned, saluted again and ushered into the consul's presence a native in a white sulham, who salaamed as deeply as did the interpreter.

"I, Sidi Consul," said the native in excellent English, "am Hajeeb, desirous of serving you."

As he spoke, his keen black eyes dug into the vice-consul's, then followed detail by detail the make-up of the young official's face. What he saw there seemed to satisfy him. As for Courtney, he received an impression of calm strength from the brown face of the native—a face that had many little lines around the eyes and the lips, which bore a short black mustache, and a close-cut black beard. The nose was straight and narrow, the eyes level. Sidi

Hajeeb's head was framed in the hood of the white sulham he wore, and carried an immaculately white turban wrapped tightly about a crimson fez, of which only the edge showed across his forehead, like a strip of blood.

"Do you think—hm—that you can find the murderer of Mr. Stanhope?" asked the vice-consul, rather inanely, he himself felt, when the question was voiced. But no hint of a smile showed on the Moor's face; he answered in a deep, slow voice.

"That is as Allah wills," he said. "*In-shallah*—if it is so written in the Book. But at least, Sidi Consul, I can try. His Excellency, the governor, has asked me to do so."

"Oh, that's it." Courtney reflected a moment. "Yes, I suppose it is up to him, too."

"Usually," explained Sidi Hajeeb, slowly, "if a foreigner is killed in our country, the Sultan is held for a large indemnity. An indemnity out of all proportion to the worth. But in this case, of course, Sidi Consul, the matter is somewhat different. The Sultan pays the indemnity, but then requires to be reimbursed by the governor in whose province the—er—accident has taken place. Thus his Excellency, the governor of this district, becomes personally interested in bringing the criminal to justice."

Courtney nodded understanding.

"Well, go ahead then, Sidi Hajeeb," he said. "And if you can catch the fellow who killed my countryman, I shall be glad to reward you. We can't have Americans killed without doing something about it, you see. And of course it must have been a native who killed him, because no foreigner, no Christian, as you call them, could have gained access to Stanhope and gotten away, without being seen. Not a chance, with those servants. And recognized, to boot—because there aren't half a dozen foreigners here. And Stanhope's servants tell me there hasn't been a Christian to see him for three days, except the French consul. So it must have been a native."

The Moor rose, bowed.

"I quite agree with you, Sidi Consul,"

he said. "Manifestly it was the act of one of my own people. The few Christians here are all government officials, and consequently above suspicion. The crime was committed with a native knife, used with that upward stroke which we alone use. We Moroccans are partial to the knife. It is noiseless. The Christian uses a pistol. Also, three natives visited Mr. Stanhope the night he died. No Christian could have entered the house unseen by the servants. Nor could one have made his escape after the crime, had it borne the mark of a Christian hand; foreigners are too few here; they are most conspicuous; their every movement is known—and there is no speedy way of escape. That it was the act of a native seems obvious. So now I shall go to work, *sidi*."

"Don't you want me to tell you about the case?" asked the vice-consul, surprised.

Hajeeb shook his head.

"I need not trouble you, Sidi Consul," he said. "If you will but instruct your interpreter to attend to any small matters which may arise—"



AT THAT moment the door opened and the interpreter came in. Courtney gave the instructions desired by Hajeeb. The Moor salaamed and strode toward the door.

"Mr. Bode has returned, *sidi*," said the interpreter to Courtney.

"Good! Let him come in at once. And hereafter, do not keep him waiting; bring him in."

On the threshold of the office Hajeeb confronted the American, stepped back quickly, with a bow, to let him enter.

"Oh, Sidi Hajeeb," called Courtney. "I want you to meet Mr. Bode. Bode, shake hands with Sidi Hajeeb; I'll tell you about him later."

America and Morocco gravely shook hands.

"Mr. Bode," explained Courtney to Hajeeb, "arrived this morning from El Araiche, thanks to Allah. He has generously offered to help me with this Stanhope business."

He dismissed the Moor with a quick smile, turned to offer his hand to Bode. The native slipped out in the wake of the interpreter.

"Who," asked Bode, dropping into a chair and lighting a cigaret, "is Sidi Hajeeb? Anybody I should know?"

And while Courtney explained to his fellow American who Sidi Hajeeb was, Sidi Hajeeb himself nosed about for a scent on the man trail he had taken up.

By sunset Hajeeb had satisfied himself as to certain matters. He had talked with the servants of the late Martin Stanhope, had checked up on their alibis in the cases of those who had been away from the house, had probed into their pasts and presents, had assured himself that no one of them had killed his master. He had expected this assurance; he knew his own countrymen well enough to know that had one of them done the murder he would have fled to some wild portion of the country where he would be quite safe—taking with him the coin and jewels so readily available in the Stanhope house.

That robbery—at least robbery of convertible wealth—was not the motive for the crime seemed quite evident to Hajeeb. This, of course, meant that the American had made a personal enemy. But neither from the servants nor from any other source could Hajeeb discover either that Stanhope had such an enemy, or that his nature was such as to create one. His servants apparently liked him as well as they could like any foreigner; he was considerate and fairly generous.

From what the servants told him, plus what the death chamber, the body and the lethal weapon contributed, Hajeeb reconstructed the crime. Three natives, horse dealers, had visited the American somewhat late at night. Two of them had gone away, leaving the third. Shortly afterward this man too had taken his departure. Stanhope had said he would show him out himself, had told the servant Abdeslem that he would do so, that Abdeslem need not wait up. Was this third native let out of the house by the American, or did he let himself out, leav-

ing behind him a man murdered by the upward thrust of a twelve-inch curved *kumiah* blade?

If the former, then another person had gained access to the house after his departure. This, Hajeeb perceived, was not probable; was most improbable, in fact. Because one of the stable boys slept at the only outer gate; he would have to be awakened to give entrance to any visitor. But the third horse dealer could have let himself out unperceived in case the groom chanced to be asleep on his blanket by the gate—as he admitted having been, night being well advanced. Yes, a man could get out unperceived, but he could not get in, because, as Hajeeb had ascertained, there was a modern American spring lock on the gate.

It very much appeared, the Moor considered, that this third native was the murderer. He remained longer than the others, which might show some ulterior intention. He was alone with Stanhope. The *kumiah* was a native weapon, and this particular knife was of a variety extremely common, a long, curved blade in a wooden handle, the hilt bound cheaply with brass. Such knives were made by the thousands; nine out of ten Moors carried them. Yes, this third native was the man to be found.

On his way to the gate of the Stanhope place Hajeeb encountered the servant Abdeslem, the one who had last seen his master alive. He stopped the elderly fellow to ask a few further questions about the Third Man, as he now thought of him. But Abdeslem shook his head; there were three men who came, two who went away first, one later. That was all he knew. Hajeeb stared into the fellow's eyes, noted that the whites of them were yellow from *keef* smoking, reflected that *keef* deadens the perceptions and the memory, shrugged and turned away.

"I do not remember, sidi," repeated the old man. "I heard him go away, from where I sat, where I was smoking a last pipeful of *keef*, sidi. And that is all I remember, except that I heard the master whistling a tune, in the manner of Christians who thus bring much evil upon themselves."

Hajeeb stared at the old man.

"You heard—you heard your master whistling? After the Third Man had gone?"

"No, sidi, no. While he was going," corrected Abdeslem, and explained how he had been awakened by the evil sound.

Hajeeb strode away, considering this new fact.

If the Third Man had killed Stanhope, the American would not have been whistling. If the old man heard some one whistling, was the American still alive after the departure of the Third Man? Pondering this problem, Hajeeb made his way back to the marketplace in the center of town, went to a native café for a glass of coffee, squatted upon the straw matting while he drank, and smoked many cigarets. And then with a sudden "By Allah!" he rose, threw some coins to the café man and went forth.

Without delay he reached the palace of the basha of the town, was admitted to the office of the basha's chief scribe, an old time friend.

"Tell me, Sidi Melek," he requested, "do any *nasrini*—Christians—reside in Arzila save those who belong to the consular corps?"

The scribe shook his head.

"The English hunter, Colonel Mansil, is camped outside the walls," he said. "The French consul's older brother is visiting him. And an American, who entered town this morning from the south, is at the Fonda Español; he is, it appears, a friend of the American vice-consul."

"No others? Consider well; it is important."

"No others," reiterated the scribe. "Unless, of course, you consider the Spaniards who—"

"No, no," interrupted Hajeeb. "They are the same as natives. Only more stupid. Hmph!" He rose. "Many thanks, my friend. Nevertheless—but no matter. *Selaama*."

Outside, Hajeeb rubbed his nose while he blinked in the sudden sunlight. Then he proceeded hurriedly back to the business part of town. Evening was coming

on; already some of the shopkeepers were gathering up their goods, preparing to close the little cubicles which served them as places of business.

"For a little space I have been a fool," Hajeeb admitted to himself as he went along. "I should have known. He would retain his disguise. In that disguise I must find him. A *nasrini*—a Christian—posing as a native. A most difficult thing to do. He must be very careful. He can not speak much, or go to mosque at all, for he would be discovered. He can not remain in any house with natives; they would recognize him as a *ruimi*. What could he do? What could he do? I think I know; he could be one of the five hundred beggars which infest the town. He could make himself filthy and sit along the wall with a begging bowl and howl the one word necessary to beg alms. No one would talk to him, associate with him, note where he sleeps, eats. Yes, I shall find my man among them. Tomorrow."

The morrow dawned, and with the dawn Hajeeb was afoot. Up one street, down another, stopping before beggar after beggar. To each he addressed a few words as he keenly scrutinized him, words which demanded an answer in words which no *ruimi*, no foreigner, would be apt to possess, little oddities of Koranic greeting and response, peculiarities of Islam. Once he paused and watched as the body of Martin Stanhope was borne by to the burying ground of the tiny Catholic mission. Again as Courtney and Bode rode past him, stopped to greet him, to ask how he was proceeding.

"As Allah wills," he answered briefly. "Slowly."

They rode on. Hajeeb continued his interviews with the beggars. He was assured that somewhere he would find what he sought; some one of these filthy seekers of alms, wrapped in their rags, would reveal himself as an imposter; would hesitate, stumble, try to evade the trap. Then the hand of the law would fall upon him for the murder of the American.

But when the sun again touched the edge of the gray Atlantic he was still un-

successful in his search. He had talked to hundreds of beggars, but none of them was the man he sought. Perhaps he had missed one or two, but he thought not. Perhaps the murderer was in some hiding place. But he could not remain there long. He would have to come out for food, for other reasons probably. He would come as a beggar, of that Hajeeb was certain, with an odd sense of perception: that was the one identity in which he could be safe. And wherever he was, he would have to remain in the town until the search was finished, for the gates of Arzila had been closed, by the basha's orders, when the murder had been discovered. The guards at the town gates swore that no one had gone out before that order went into effect. The murderer was still in Arzila . . .

Thus Thursday passed as had Wednesday, and still Hajeeb sought in vain. And now he grew doubtful, uncertain of his judgment, questioning whether he was upon the wrong road.

"I have been too single minded," he criticized himself, as he sat cross-legged at a little table in his home and drank his morning coffee.

"Give the head the rein and it runs away with itself. Let us suppose that I have been mistaken. In what, then? There is only one possibility of error. That is in supposing the murderer to be in hiding. But if he is not in hiding where can he be? His disguise would not permit him to associate with us Moors. But if such is the case—hmph!"

He stared into space, coffee cup suspended, forgotten. Then:

"*Allah kerim!*" he breathed. "This comes from jumping at conclusions. This comes from not questioning *everything*." He looked now at the glass of coffee in his hand. "If I were a good man at this business, I would question even if this is coffee I am drinking, and prove that it was before I drank it. *Y'allah!* What a fool I have been."

He drained the glass, rose and proceeded to the American consulate. Utair, one of the guards, rose at his approach.

Hajeeb noted saddled horses tied to the wall nearby.

"Some one rides?" he asked.

"The consul's friend, Sidi Bode," replied Utair. "He is with the sidi consul now."

"Take me to the consul," requested Hajeeb. "I have news which will interest him."

"Come, sidi," said Utair, and led the way. But when they reached the door which opened into the vice-consul's office, Hajeeb laid a hand upon the guard's arm.

"Wait you here, Utair," he commanded. "Here outside the door. I may desire to send a message."

"I shall wait, sidi," assented the guard, and opened the door for Hajeeb.



THE man hunter entered, paused on the threshold to make salaam, stepped forward as Utair closed the door behind him. His first glance had taken in everything of importance—namely, the vice-consul seated at his desk, Mr. Bode in a comfortable armchair facing it, both smoking, both smiling. At sight of the Moor, their faces straightened, the consul nodded, motioned Hajeeb to approach, pointed to a vacant chair. But Hajeeb declined to be seated. Instead he walked slowly toward the consul, past Mr. Bode, but pausing a fraction of a breath to scrutinize the back of the American's head as he did so.

"Pardon, sidi," he said, and touched Mr. Bode's back with his hand. "There was an insect—a spider." His eyes narrowed as he stared at a peculiar darkness behind Mr. Bode's ears. "No, sidi, I shall not be seated. Alas, I have work to do, all that I have done being thus far unsuccessful. You—" he paused, pointed at the big pile of letters and other documents on the vice-consul's desk—"you assuredly are much occupied also."

"Yes," agreed Courtney. "Yes. You see, Sidi Hajeeb—" He hesitated, then continued, "Why should I not tell you? We've been looking over Mr. Stanhope's papers, papers out of a strong

box in his house. It appears—hm—it appears that Martin Stanhope was not his true name, that he was formerly a crook on a grand scale, or else we are both badly mistaken. Besides which, there is a letter here, a letter several years old, threatening to get even with him. Written by a man named Elmer Scales. Scales apparently was — er — double-crossed we say—” he noted Hajeeb’s nod of understanding, continued. “Double-crossed by Stanhope, or Barwell, to give him his correct name. But of course this has nothing, can have nothing to do with his murder. That was done, as we know, by a native.” He looked for confirmation to Bode, who nodded thoughtfully.

“Sidi Consul,” said Hajeeb then, from his standing position before the consul’s desk; Bode was seated at his left, “Sidi Consul, may I crave permission to send a message by your guard, Utair? It will occupy him but a few minutes.”

“Assuredly, assuredly, sidi,” replied Courtney, and pressed the button on his desk which operated a buzzer outside. Shortly Utair opened the door, strode in, saluted and waited. The consul looked at Hajeeb.

“Give your orders, sidi,” he requested.

Then Hajeeb spoke, but it was in Arabic. And his words were odd.

“I also have come to see the master about a horse,” he said.

The guard looked blank, then puzzled. Hajeeb, however, although he seemed to be looking at Utair, was watching Bode. He saw that gentleman give a sudden start, instantly checked, and then begin an almost silent whistling between his teeth.

“Are you armed?” he then asked Utair in swift Arabic.

“Yes, sidi, a knife.”

“Be prepared, then.”

And now it was obvious to Hajeeb that Mr. Bode did not understand, although he manifestly had understood the sentence about a horse. He played his cards quickly, so quickly that the vice-consul was scarcely able to follow the trend of events.

“Sidi Consul,” said Hajeeb, “I can tell you who murdered Mr. Stanhope. It was not a native. It was a Christian. An American. In fact, I suspect it was in reality the man named Elmer Scales, the enemy whom you have spoken of. However that may be, this American disguised himself as a native Moor, gained access to Mr. Stanhope’s house with two men who he knew were seeing Stanhope about some horses, killed him with a native knife, with the native stroke, which he had taken the trouble to learn. I hunted for two days for an American disguised as a Moor, as a beggar. Then it became apparent to me that he might not be so disguised; that having committed the crime in Moorish guise, he would then become again the American. As there is but one American in Arzila besides yourself, I regret—”

Bode was on his feet. His hand flashed to his armpit; an automatic pistol gleamed in it. Sidi Hajeeb flung himself aside as the shot crashed through the room, felt a sharp pain in his head, fell as he saw Utair leap, knife in hand, toward the American. Again the pistol crashed, and Utair spun halfway round, the knife jumping from his hand. Then Bode was at the door. He flung it open, fired once more at the prostrate figure of Hajeeb, grinned evilly at the consul and backed through the outer offices.

Utair crawled, white lipped, toward his knife.

The vice-consul leaned upon his desk in a bewildered, incredulous maze.

Slowly Hajeeb raised himself on his elbow, opened his eyes. Bode was at the doorway of the second room. Swiftly Hajeeb’s hand rose, a flash and a crash came from it—and Bode threw up his arms, whirled, fell, twitched, then lay still.

Hajeeb rose and with the vice-consul’s aid helped Utair to his feet. The guard had a bullet through his shoulder, Hajeeb a nasty bullet slash on his head. The three of them stood looking down upon the back of the man the Moor had run to earth.

"See," said Hajeeb, pointing. "The stain is still behind his ears. I noted that when I brushed an imaginary spider from his coat collar. And the Arabic phrase he understood was the one I imagined he must have used to gain entrance to the house with the two natives. That he is Elmer Scales I think you will also find, but it does not matter."

"But what, Sidi Hajeeb," asked Courtney, "made you suspect it was not the work of a native? The knife, the manner of its use, the presence of natives, even Bode disguised as one. I never had a doubt, myself, but that a native had committed the crime."

"At first, and for a long time, sidi, I believed it to be the work of a native. The way the knife was used, as you say. And yet that is one of the first things that a Christian learns about Morocco—that we kill with an upward stroke, instead of the downward stroke of the West. Our motions, very largely, are reversed—or yours are. Mr. Bode came by caravan from El Araiche. How long he was in El Araiche I can not say—but long enough, unquestionably, to learn how to wear native garments, how to wield a native knife, how to speak certain necessary words of our language. Hundreds of Europeans have done the same thing. He had, you see, to make it look like a murder committed by a native in order to insure his own escape."

"But—but what made you think, then, in view of all that, that no native committed the crime?"

"Did you note, Sidi Consul," asked Hajeeb, "that after I had spoken the few Arabic words he really did know, those which he used to gain access to Mr. Stanhope, that he began to whistle gently? I have noted that all Christians have the habit of whistling when they are emotionally moved. When they are happy they whistle, because of high spirits; when they are sad, they whistle to help their morale; when they are afraid, they whistle for courage; when they are puzzled they whistle for enlightenment; when they are surprised—or in danger—oh, always the American whistles; I know the customs of the *nasrini*."

"Sure," agreed Courtney. "I do it myself. But I don't see—"

"The murderer whistled as he left the scene of the crime. Whether unconsciously, or to buoy up his spirits, or to give an air of innocence, I do not know, but he whistled."

"Still, a Moor—" began Courtney.

"Sidi Consul," replied Hajeeb. "While you remain in Morocco you will continue always to learn strange things about us. One thing you do not yet know is—Have you ever heard a native whistle? No, you have not. It is tabu. It brings great misfortune upon one's head. Moors do not whistle. Therefore, you see . . ."



The Philippine PROSPECTOR

By CHARLES A. FREEMAN

GOLD exists in the Philippines, and in well paying quantities.

The white prospectors of the Philippines are not numerous, and the majority are in their middle years—former soldiers, or men who came to the Islands with Army pack trains or as teamsters. Packers in particular knew the methods of prospecting from their experiences in freighting through the mining districts of the West, and when in 1914 the Army abolished the civilian packtrains, they abandoned the *aparejo* and the diamond hitch for drills and dynamite.

Prospectors roam the hills within a few miles of Manila, as they do in the more remote districts, but as yet the chief gold producing region remains the Mountain Province. This comprises the lofty network of peaks of the Sierra Caraballos in northern Luzon, and there the prospector lives a life that is more temperate than tropical. Ice forms on the highest pinnacles in Benguet and Bontoc, and the gee stringed Igorotte, Apayao, or Ilongote wraps himself in a blanket at night and sleeps before an open fire; and so does the prospector.

Lean, tanned, with leg muscles bulging from climbing, and with a slight stoop from much looking toward the ground, the prospector is easily recognized on the streets of Baguio, "the summer capital," where lowlanders and tourists go to enjoy the novelty of open fireplaces in the tropics.

When the sun drops down one side of the great divide, and the moon rises on the other, then the tom-toms commence to sound and the dance fires to twinkle. Perhaps the grizzled prospector lounging on his bed of mountain grass, and with a

clay jar of the heady *bassi* by his side, will explain to his dusky partner, if he be married, the glories of that New York or Chicago which he knew thirty years ago.

And when he "hits," as he does at intervals; finds a pocket in a river bed or sells a claim to one of the companies able to work a low grade ore proposition, he comes to Manila. Then for hectic days and nights he burns the candle at both ends in a manner possible only to a man who has led an outdoor life. Cabarets and road houses know him, and he scatters his largess with a princely hand. Perhaps he even visits nearby China or Japan—but he never goes "home." The Islands have enmeshed him in their net, and some day he will be back in the clear mountain air, free from the taint of effete civilization which he has breathed in the warm lowlands.

Always he dreams of new strikes. Mindoro, *mina del oro*—Spanish for gold mine. The very name of that little known island stirs something in his brain, although he realizes that while all of its rivers carry gold, no one has ever located its source.

Yes, he will drift that way soon. Or perhaps it is to Mindanao among the Bagobos in the mountains of Davao, or to the Paracale diggings in the Camarines. Always ready to take a chance, to face incredible hardships, to live like a savage for months at a time in order to enjoy a few days' whirl in the cities which soon disgust and sicken him, the white prospector of the Philippines is an outstanding character among the men of his race living in voluntary exile far from the land of their birth.

Beginning

A Two-Part Novel of the Everglades

By HUGH
PENDEXTER

CHAPTER I

OLD HICKORY'S COURIER

GENERAL Andrew Jackson, commander of the western division, read the orders of the Secretary of War and turned to the blue eyed, red headed messenger.

"You know what's in this paper, Natchez?"

"I suspect what's in it, and I hope my guess is right, sir," answered the young man, who commonly was called by the name of the lively Mississippi River town. "Many are hoping, General, that you'll soon be going to the Floridas to clean up that mess."

"The Floridas logically belong to the United States," Jackson gravely replied. "Some day they will be ours, young man. The northeastern States will oppose any aggrandizement of the Union in the South and West. However, that Spanish thumb of territory will be ours, although we may have to give Texas to secure it."

"Lose the Texas country!" exclaimed Natchez, his tone skeptical.

Jackson smiled and nodded, but added:

"Only for a little while, however. Sectional jealousies must be catered to—to a certain extent. If Texas goes we'll

hold on to the string that will pull her back."

"Sentiment in Washington is that you take command of the Florida Army."

"Tush, tush, my boy. You mean, not only take command, but also furnish the Army. But General Gaines is a very competent soldier. He only lacks men to attend to that business, and the authority to hang his entire commissary departments. As you doubtless know, the message you bring is an order for me to march. As major-general, commanding the western section of the southern de-





DEVIL'S BREW

partment, I must go. You were with me in New Orleans. I remember your red head and the very tall rifle you carried. What a fight that was! Just twenty-five minutes from the first signal rocket to the surrender! And neither side knew the war already was ended!"

"If you please, sir, I'm much more experienced now. God give I be with you in the Floridas."

The victor of New Orleans, fiery and irresistible when aroused, gentle with those whom he loved, beamed approvingly on the young redhead, and asked:

"Just why are you called Natchez?

It scarcely would be a compliment if they made it 'Natchez-Under-The-Hill.' It's time I knew your real name."

"Abner Rodney, sir. Kentucky born, Mississippi River raised. I went down with the flatboats, and got into a wring at the landing with some drunken fools who wanted to throw the cannon balls overboard. There was quite a fuss. After that they took to calling me Natchez."

"I remember about the cannon balls. I thank you for saving the bulk of them. Well, son, of course I must go to West Florida. The Seminoles are being urged on by Spain and renegades from England and these United States."

"I can go with you?" asked Natchez eagerly.

"You shall be there with me—there may be more cannon balls to save." He paused and stared through the window, his profile growing stern as he reviewed certain evils he believed must be cured. Wheeling about, he abruptly announced, "If you are agreeable you shall be there ahead of me. I must send some one whom I can trust."

"I'll start at once, sir!" cried Natchez.

"Nay, nay. Not so fast. Why should you precede me?"

Natchez looked extremely foolish. Jackson, amused, smiled and murmured—"Impetuous youth—but once I was the same."

Natchez barely managed to smother a grin. He could not imagine the intrepid soldier ever losing any of his martial zeal. Jackson became objective, speaking crisply, and explained:

"I have received valuable information from a man in trade on the Hatcha Hallowaggi, some thirty miles from the St. Marks trading post on the river of that name. His name is Israel Blate. His life wouldn't be worth a shilling if the Englishman, Ambrister, and the Scotchman, Arbuthnot, read his letters to me. Mr. Blate, under the seal of confidence, informs me that a third individual is now busily engaged in stirring up the Seminoles to continue the war. It will be your duty to find Blate, confide in him, and bring back the latest news. You will meet me on my way to the Florida line. The new factor in the situation is a certain Captain Ned McCarty, a courtesy title. He did us rare service at New Orleans, coming there from Lafitte's settlement in Barataria."

"One of the Baratarian pirates," said Natchez.

The general winced, pursed his lips and suggested:

"Why not consider him from the angle of having served with us in Louisiana? He's a very gallant soldier. I'll swear to that."

"A fine, upstanding, stout hearted fellow," Natchez agreed.

"Not so fast." This was spoken a bit querulously. "According to Mr. Blate, our gentleman is turning his gay coat and casting in with other malcontents. I will give a letter to be delivered to him. He is a gallant soldier; yet a soldier of fortune. I fear he has no National allegiance. Mr. Blate has heard many stories about him and, like a good patriot, reports them to me for what they may be worth. In Blate's last report McCarty was at St. Marks. You will go there first. Then to Hatcha Hallowaggi."

"And if he already is supporting the Indians, and can't, or won't do as you order, shall I shoot him, sir?"

"Good Lord! What a bloodthirsty young whelp! Nothing of the sort, son. If by any accident you should lose my written message, you will promise him, in my name, that I'll hang him very high if he encourages the Seminoles." The last was spoken fiercely, and with a flash of the eye that eloquently vouched for the general's sincerity. The next moment he was staring broodingly at the fireplace, and confessing, "It would be a most disagreeable duty for me to hang that man. I love a man who can and will fight. But he mustn't fight *me*."

Seating himself at the table, Jackson took a quill in hand, pondered for a few moments and wrote rapidly:

Captain Ned McCarty, of Barataria Point
Honored Sir:

I have the honor of informing you that I have been advised that you are actively engaged in the Florida trade, and are at present on the West Coast. Reports concerning your activities also picture you as being hostile to the interests of these United States. It is difficult for me to believe this, remembering New Orleans. If these reports do you an injustice you will consider this letter as never having been written. If, on my arrival at the border, I find the reports are true, then only the most timely expedition on your part will serve to keep your head out of a noose.

Very respectfully yours—

A. JACKSON, commanding Western Division,
Southern Department.



HE PROCEEDED to write a line of introduction to Israel Blate. Sanding and sealing the captain's letter, he handed both missives to Natchez and warned—

"Let nothing come between you and the consummation of this business."

"If the captain is alive and in the Floridas your message will be delivered, sir. Only my death can prevent it."

The strong face beamed with kindness, and Jackson said:

"God bless you, lad. I must often depend upon very young men."

Natchez gazed most worshipfully at

his idol, picked up his squirrel skin hat and paused only to ask—

"And that is all?"

The general snapped his fingers impatiently and exclaimed:

"Come close to forgetting another little matter. You have heard of Cæsar, a huge black?"

"Yes, sir. Sometimes called the Black Emperor."

"I'll 'emperor' him!" savagely declared the general. "That is, if I can catch him. The black devil! The blood of three murdered men and two women, killed along the southern boundary of this State, demands that he be fetched back to answer for his crimes. Blate sent word he is in the Spanish country. If you come across him see if, with Blate's aid, you can run him north of the line."

"If I find that is overhard, what then?"

"Kill him! I authorize you to do so. If he suspects you are an American, he surely will murder you if he can. In his last communication Blate says the villain boasts of his crimes. If he escapes punishment we'll have a black uprising, spreading from New Orleans to St. Augustine, and no one can say how far north. The Cherokees, Choctaws and Creeks will join in and keep us busy north of the Floridas. Our slaves are daily running away to join this Cæsar."

"Now you have a three-barrel errand. Find Blate, take his advice and get the latest news; deliver my message to Captain McCarty and, last of all, settle with Cæsar. But if he is too far south, or on the East Coast, leave him for Blate to dispose of, while you are hastening back to meet me. Now, when can you start?"

"Almost at once. I must call at the inn for my horse."

General Jackson followed him to the door, shook his hand and patted his shoulder. Natchez was off at a run. Reaching the inn, he ordered his horse saddled and brought to the door. He replenished his supply of powder and tiny bullets, and added a long pistol to his equipment. A thick package of bread and

meat was secured from the cook room. While he was thus engaged a mulatto from General Jackson's house came to the rear of the hostelry and thrust his head through an open window, speaking rapidly to the cook. He used a patois which contained more Creek words than it did English. As he talked he was continually glancing about, his eyes rolling in terror.

The cook, a Creek-negro breed, nodded his heavy head and murmured:

"They will know he is coming. Cæsar will know. The white man will be seen no more. His soul shall turn blue. His body shall be covered with black earth." The cook, despite his menial work, was a powerful *shaman*. He blew shrilly on his fingers. A colored lad came on the run. To him the cook gave a message, and the boy nodded and bounded away.

By the time Natchez was swinging into the saddle several furtive figures were making for the hilly country. General Jackson, from his study window, saw a column of smoke rise east of the town. He watched it for several minutes and then mused—

"If this was farther south I'd vow that was an Indian war smoke."

Natchez's route was southeast, by the head of the Elk and the site of ancient Crow Town on the Tennessee, destroyed in 1794. Before he had covered ten miles he had the feeling that he was being followed. This instinct was very strong, and he found himself twisting in the saddle to look back. He had visioned with nerve tingling anticipation his arrival at St. Marks, where he would be in the center of intrigue and stirring adventure. He had not looked for anything to break the monotony of the long ride. The thought that he was being dogged was not to his liking. He combatted the nervous inclination to spy on his back trail, and tried to convince himself it was imagination. He faced to the front while crossing a spur of the hilly range, and then was impelled to look behind him. A column of smoke was reaching high into the heavens, like a black finger writing on the sky.

He made his camp that night near the mouth of Duck River and, for the first time since his wide wanderings, felt strangely ill at ease. This mental depression increased as the darkness drew its curtains around his tiny fire. There were no Indians to fear. He was not afraid of white wanderers. Nevertheless, he draped his storm cloak over a log and placed his hat upon it. He retired into a cover of bushes, making a couch of his blanket. The decoy by the fire was an instinctive trick, not based on cold reason.

After an hour of blinking at the stars through the tree tops he managed to fall asleep. Instinct, ever on guard, aroused him. He awoke as a woodsman should, without moving a muscle. He instantly was wide awake in every faculty, and he remained motionless while he sought to discover what had aroused him. Back in the growth he heard the scream of a tree cat. Farther away a fox barked. Moving his hand slowly, he picked up his pistol and laid it on his chest. With his other hand he seized the long rifle. His head was turned so he might watch the glowing coals of the fire.

A soft sound told of spying feet. An incautious step caused a twig to break. He raised the long pistol and waited. The coals were blotted from view, and Natchez was startled to hear the thud of a heavy blow and the wild scream of a tree cat. He cocked and discharged the pistol. A heavy body crashed through the bush growth, marking the flight of the would-be assassin.

At the first light Natchez saddled his horse and hurried on. Shortly after sunrise he looked back, and involuntarily shivered as again he beheld the black smoke. He believed his nocturnal visitor had returned to the camp-fire and had utilized the coals in making the ominous signal. Not until he had turned south and had entered a narrow defile did he halt. Beside a bubbling spring he ate corn bread and the last of his meat, and allowed his mount to rest. For the rest of that day he had weird mind pic-

tures of smoke columns that moved with intelligence across the rugged hill country.



AT THE edge of evening, on the site of ancient Crow Town, he killed a turkey with a throw of his knife. He picketed his horse on the outskirts of the town, and broiled the turkey. He knew the Indians had kept clear of the ruined village because of their belief that it was haunted by evil spirits. Natchez had responded to his backwoods environment and had absorbed some of the aborigines' superstitions, along with their knowledge of savage cunning.

A raven-mocker came tumbling down from the high heavens, by the simple process of closing one wing. These peculiar aerial gymnastics caused Natchez uneasiness. His white heritage insisted it was only a bird enjoying a novel form of amusement, but he wished it had not come so close to his camp. All the cannibalistic myths of the Cherokee, built around the feathered acrobat, passed through his mind. The bird soared high again, and once more came tumbling down to within fifty feet of the ground. Natchez raised his rifle; then he succumbed to border superstition. He inspected two of the cabins, but decided the outdoors was cleaner. In the back of his mind was the notion that he was being watched.

An hour after sunset he spread his blanket and picketed his horse in the open some distance from any cover. The animal was sure to give an alarm if approached by a stranger. The sun was drowned in a sea of blood when Natchez threw himself on the blanket and closed his eyes.

Something struck the blanket close to his head. It was an arrow, sticking through the edge of the cloth. As he was endeavoring to trace the source of its flight, a second shaft struck close to his right side; and this time he heard the twang of a bow string. The arrows were being sent from a point north of his

position, and had landed too nearly perpendicular to have been shot from a cabin.

Shifting the position of his saddle so as to afford more protection, he scanned the growth on the north side of the opening. The Bowman could discharge his missiles only from a tree in the open. Natchez's keen gaze shuttled back and forth along the face of the growth, and finally became interested in a slight protuberance some forty feet from the ground. At first glance it appeared to be a part of the main stem. A second scrutiny satisfied Natchez it was the copper colored thigh of his would-be slayer.

He threw up the long rifle and fired, and a man came tumbling to the ground and remained motionless. With pistol cocked, Natchez ran forward, but the sprawling figure did not move. The man was a Creek. The tiny bullet had bored through his thigh, and the fall from the tree had broken his neck. The Kentuckian was convinced the man was the same who had tried to kill him in the night.

Reloading his rifle, Natchez gathered up his few belongings, rode south for five miles, and made another camp. This time he was not disturbed. Yet, when he rose in the morning his eyes, instinctively sweeping the heavens, found what he hoped not to find. Black smoke was rising in the north, and from its density he knew some one had fired the deserted town.

From then on and down the Chattahoochee River trail there arose smoke after smoke behind Jackson's special messenger. It was not until he came to the Florida line, where the Fish River unites with the Chattahoochee to form the Apalachicola, that he beheld a smoke ahead. Smokes of cabins and Indians he had seen aplenty, but such were not to be confused with the dark column following him from the north, and this similar murky pillar now arising ahead of him.

He halted for half an hour and pondered over his situation. Being between the two smokes was equivalent to being in a trap. He was greatly worried because his

errand had been discovered almost before he left Nashville. One dead man testified to the iron purpose of some unknown enemy.

The night passed without any disturbance, and early in the morning Natchez was riding along a trail leading to the upper waters of the St. Marks. Somewhere along this river he hoped to find Captain Ned McCarty, Baratarian pirate, New Orleans patriot, and an altogether graceless scamp. It was a relief to look north and south and fail to find any signal smokes. He came to villages of the Lower Creeks, who would have killed him had they suspected he was one of Jackson's men. This hate resulted from the severe punishment inflicted on the Creek nation by Jackson during the War of 1812.

Natchez represented himself to be a Scotch trader. He inquired for his "friend," McCarty, and was pleased to learn the adventurer was last heard of down the river.

When within a few miles of St. Marks and on the outskirts of a small village, Natchez came to a cabin and made a discovery that caused him to slide from his horse and keep the animal between himself and the square hole of a window. It was a horse grazing nearby that prompted this defensive maneuver. The animal was one he had seen recently in a hovel back of the Nashville tavern.

When abreast of the curtains of raw-hide ropes he suddenly advanced with drawn pistol, swept the curtain aside and crouched low, aiming his weapon at a vague figure in a hammock.

"Hop out! No tricks!" he commanded, even as the hammock began to give up its occupant.

Then his hand dropped to his side and he gaped at the angry visage of a white woman. And such a woman! Eyes as blue as his own were resenting the intrusion. She was young; and her hair, as black as his was red, was done up in the Spanish mode. Her person was exquisite, and was as richly attired as that of any Havana grandee's daughter.

"You are an American—your manners prove that," she said in English. Then she indulged in a torrent of Spanish.

When she paused to catch her breath, Natchez stammered:

"I'm tremendously sorry, miss. I expected to run into a fight."

"One usually does when they break into a house as you have done. What are you waiting for? Get out! *Vamos!* You've spoiled my siesta. Go! Who are you, Young-Man-Who-Breaks-Doors? Is that your name?"

Natchez was so overwhelmed he could not speak for a moment.

"Can't you talk?" the girl demanded, her eyes blazing.

"I'm Abner Rodney, Kentucky born. Every one calls me Natchez. I'm mighty sorry. I was looking for a runaway nigger, who murdered some folks up North. Never dreamed a young white woman was here."

He paused and hopefully awaited an explanation.

"You'll never take any runaway blacks up North," she curtly told him. "If the Creeks knew your business they'd have you in the fire. And this is not a white, or peace, town. Why are you staying?"

"I'm going, ma'am—miss. Saw a nag outside that came from Nashville. Thought Cæsar rode him down here."

"The Black Emperor!" the girl exclaimed. "You really thought to take him back North?" The query was derisive.

"If I don't it'll be because I've killed him," Natchez sharply replied; and he backed through the curtain.

The girl followed him, remarking:

"I'd say it was a man's task. The best thing your friends can wish for you is that you don't find him."

"He's a murderous brute. How is it that you, a white girl, can live alone in this place?"

"I enjoy being alone. I am under the protection of Serpent Pique. He is a friend of my father's."

"Tattooed Serpent," repeated Natchez. "His friendship ought to make this a

white town for you, miss, or señorita."

She stared at him coldly.

"But not for you. You must be crazy to come down here, while the Lower Creeks and Seminoles are at war with the United States, and admit that you are an American. Turn back before they have your red head on a pole."

She was the most refreshing picture Natchez had ever seen; for the moment all memory of hostile smokes was dead. He was so sincere in unconsciously revealing his homage, a softer expression entered the girl's eyes. She told him:

"If my father were here he might save you—but turn back before men come from the village. Your business is impossible."

He nodded, but showed no fear.

"I have another piece of work to do," he explained. "I wish to find a certain white man. I am seeking Captain Ned McCarty."

She glided forward, her face filled with amazement, as she softly exclaimed:

"How odd! He is my father. I am Señorita Isobella McCarty . . . Wait for me by your horse. I will ride with you. My father should be at St. Marks."

Natchez, thoroughly nonplused, gaped at her foolishly. As reason returned he sensed much embarrassment should the girl be present when he found Captain McCarty. He heard himself expostulating:

"But would it be safe? Would you be protected there?"

"I am safe wherever my father is," she answered. Then she was beyond the curtain, scooping feminine articles of dress and adornment into a large velvet bag.

"And if he is not there?" Natchez called out to her. "You are under a chief's protection here. Would it be the same at St. Marks?"

"I shall not need any chief's protection. My father will be at the trading post."

"Has any chief authority over St. Marks?"

"It's a trading post. White men rule there," she called back.

"White men may be worse than red men."

The girl joined him and handed him the big bag.

"Surely I'm not afraid of white men. You do not wish to escort me. It is better so. I go alone. A McCarty needs no *caballero*. Clear out! Ride behind me. You Americans are all alike. Rough—ill mannered."

"Your father fought under Jackson at New Orleans. You don't even know the conditions at the trading posts in this Spanish province. Riff-raff, wreckage. That's why your father left you up here. He can't protect you at St. Marks."

"You lie! He could protect me in hell itself!"

Natchez bowed low and went to his horse.

"I am waiting for you."

"I ride alone."

Natchez seated himself cross legged on the ground, while the girl disappeared again. From behind the flimsy curtain came the sound of various articles being hurled about. Natchez smiled grimly; then cursed the luck that had brought Ned McCarty's fiery daughter on the scene just as that adventurer was to be stirred to anger by General Jackson's warning.

She leaped through the curtain, a slim tornado of wrath and loveliness. The insolence of her Spanish mother was staring through her eyes in supreme contempt. Natchez came to his feet like a released spring. She looked beyond him and toward the north, her expression changing to one of mild surprise. He shifted his own gaze. A smoke was streaking high into the blue heavens.

It would be death for him to be caught here, as the place was not included in the territory of a white, or peace, town. Had it been such a refuge he would be perfectly safe, as would the worst of criminals. Contrariwise the Spanish-American girl would be safe in her isolated cabin, because of the chief's protection; but in St. Marks there would be a rare scramble of lawless men to possess her. Possibly

her father did not dare risk being killed in her defense, thereby leaving her unprotected, and had left her in one of Tattooed Serpent's villages.

She walked to a small corral back of the cabin. Natchez quickly followed and saddled her horse. Neither spoke. She rode into the trade path, leading down the river, her absurd bundle of finery carried awkwardly before her. After watching her for a minute Natchez spurred alongside and took her bundle. They talked not at all. She could not know, nor would she have believed the truth, that her companion had no desire for gossip.

The smoke in the north spoke eloquently to Natchez. The chase had been so persistent there could be no doubt of the close surveillance to which he was being subjected. Tragic questions were thick in his thoughts as he attempted to vision what would happen at the trading post. And the pity of it that the little fool could not be made to understand! Of major seriousness was the fact he was disobeying General Jackson's orders. He was allowing a woman to come between him and his duty. As he brooded over her danger, and his own failure to follow Old Hickory's orders, she was addressing a steady stream of conversation at his back, speaking in English, Spanish and French, and occasionally with a bit of Irish brogue.

CHAPTER II

THE FAT MAN FROM TORTUGA

THE devil himself would have felt at home had he joined the little circle near the tall red pole at St. Marks on the Apalachicola, the most important trading post in West Florida. The sinister pole, with its festoons of scalps, was a decorative motif borrowed from Fowl Town, a Mikasauki, or Red Stick, village.

Natchez sat with his legs crossed, his hands on his knees, his quick gaze ceaselessly ranging from face to face of the

wicked company. His restless blue eyes and his deep coat of tan strongly suggested a man with a mask. Behind him Indian women and children were lounging about the entrance to the post, but there was a strange absence of warriors. Natchez had no eyes for such, nor had he had an opportunity of entering the post and talking with the trader. Once he and his companion had arrived and had picketed their horses to graze, they were surrounded by the unsavory group and had elected to show unconcern and remain. In truth, Natchez did not dare turn his back and go to the post; nor would the girl leave him. His only way of confronting ruthless odds was to appear unconcerned.

He had asked one question, and was told that Captain McCarty was not at the post. Then he had seated himself with the girl huddled beside him. He could spare her only an occasional glance as he watched, and wondered what would be happening within the next ten seconds. Across from him sat a black Hercules of a man. He was Cæsar, called the Black Emperor. He was ponderously built, with arms the size of an ordinary man's thighs. His associations with the Creeks and their runaway offspring, the Seminoles, as well as his acquaintance with the white refuse, had given the African an exaggerated egoism.

Three months back he had blindly thrown out his arms to ward off the bite of a white man's whip, and to his terror and amazement found he accidentally had hit the white and had broken his neck. He had eluded pursuit, and after the first shock he came to marvel at the miracle he had worked. He had killed a white man by the swing of an arm. Before he escaped to the Floridas he killed two more men, his hands his only weapons.

Such was Cæsar, an engine of destruction with the intelligence of a seven year old boy guiding his power. The cordial reception given him in the far Southland was the antithesis of any treatment he ever had experienced. His weak mind finally realized that he was held in respect

by his villainous associates. In that time and place only brute strength and cruelty were the current coin of power. His rebirth was immediate and the ferocity of the tiger and the strength of a giant were held in leash only by the variable mind of a child.

On Natchez's immediate left was one far more deadly than even the huge black. At first glance a stranger would have set Razill down as a drab wisp of a man, too insignificant to notice. But Razill scarcely could remember a time when he was not one of the bloody brotherhood of the Gulf Coast. The Baratarian pirates had cast him out as being too evil. Beyond Razill lolled White Hand, the Frenchman, so called because of the leprous hue of his left hand and arm. From a powder monkey up to the command of his own ship, he had learned a fearful trade. The two white men and the black were in perfect accord, and as their desires were primitive they could converse by exchanging glances.

Again Natchez announced his desire to find McCarty and arrange a trade partnership. This information whetted the avarice of the trio; for as the young man had brought no packs he must have gold.

"Booty and beauty," whispered White Hand from the corner of his mouth.

The gaze of the three remained focused on Natchez's delectable companion. They had met McCarty, but this was their first glimpse of his daughter. Her exquisite daintiness and haughty bearing aroused passion in their unbridled minds. The girl, while attempting to appear indifferent, inwardly quailed and deeply regretted having left her safe, if lonesome, sanctuary. As she continued to observe how intently the three men stared at her, she pressed a bit closer to Natchez. On her right, as immutable as a mummy, sat Tattooed Serpent, chief of the Red Sticks. Having exchanged the protection of the cabin for the dangers of St. Marks, the chief felt no concern for her safety. White men ruled at St. Marks. It was for white men to make rules for white women.

Next to Tattooed Serpent sat Cherokee Doctor, once a powerful *shaman*, but now an outcast from his people and given to spells of madness. Omitting the new arrivals the group was a fair sample of Spanish, French and American renegades. In and about the trading post were others of similar ilk, including English outcasts, runaway slaves and red savages. All such had been prompt to utilize the sanctuary afforded them by the Floridas. Natchez could not imagine a more terrible environment for a gentlewoman.

From the corner of his mouth the young Kentuckian asked—

"Why do you think your father will soon be back?"

"He always comes," she murmured, staring haughtily at White Hand, yet edging closer to Natchez.

"He will come very soon; before sundown, I hope. But don't be afraid." As Natchez spoke he was wondering how he could protect her if the baleful glances were followed by a mass attack.

"I do not like it, but I am not afraid," the girl told him.

Razill leaned forward to stare more searchingly into the girl's face, and in a lisping voice said—

"M'mselle, this illustrious company begs you not to shed all your radiance on this American interloper."

He spoke in French, and Natchez followed him quite closely. Without raising his voice, or changing his conversational tone, he warned:

"You exiled Baratarian rat! Some day your talk will cut your throat."

Razill instantly was on his feet, as if lifted by some invisible power. His thin lips were distorted by a grimace. His eyes were feral, and one slim hand closed over the haft of a belted knife. Then his interest was centered on the long pistol that Natchez picked up from the ground between his legs. The hand, so adept at hurling knives, fell away from the belt.

"Killa young massa man!" boomed Cæsar's deep voice. "Killa massa white man!"

"Young señor, you'd better go. You disturb our excellent company," said White Hand. "The maiden will stay."



TATTOOED SERPENT was quick to sense the gathering storm. He had no authority at the trading post, but he could use his influence when property rights were being ignored. He leaned forward and poked a finger at the shrinking girl and demanded—

"White man's woman?"

"She is my woman," promptly answered Natchez.

Staring at Razill, the chief advised—

"Go find white woman living alone."

The pirate simpered and sat down; but from then on his yellowish eyes stared at the reckless face of the Kentuckian and seemed to ignore the girl.

The girl came to her feet. She said to Natchez—

"I must find me a hut." Natchez rose to accompany her. Under her breath she whispered, "Stay back."

"There should be plenty of huts," he carelessly remarked, and continued at her side. In an undertone he added. "You little idiot! Do you wish to get us both killed? Ah, there is one."

He pointed to a Seminole type of structure with raised floor, thatched roof and sides. It was a risk to turn his back on the ferocious trio, but he knew he must speak plainly to the girl, praying that Tattooed Serpent would prevent any attempt at assassination.

"Will you go back?" she imperiously demanded.

"Very soon, and gladly. You're as safe here as you would be in a pack of famished wolves. Tattooed Serpent will allow me to protect you so long as he believes you're my woman. He respects my property rights. All he can do is to give me a chance to fight. He won't stop them from killing me, but he will see I have some sort of chance. If you tell him I am a stranger to you he will consider you to be fair game for any of these cut-throats. He gave you protection on the

outskirts of his town. He can't do it down here."

"I always was safe in Barataria," she insisted. "I'll kill myself—"

"Of course you would, señorita," he interrupted. "But we won't come to that pass. You're expecting your father to return at any moment. Until he comes you must remain under my protection. Otherwise, they'll draw lots for you. I have to talk plainly, but a girl from Barataria must have some idea of the ways of lawless men."

"Women are as safe where Jean Lafitte rules as they would be in one of your cold Northern villages."

"There is no Lafitte here, señorita. I give you pleasant dreams during your siesta. When we next meet hide the daggers in your eyes and try to smile. It will be all make-believe, you know."

She was eager to be alone, yet her woman's curiosity demanded that she should ask—

"You are experienced, Señor Natchez, in making believe?"

"I have no time to waste in the company of women. I do not like them," he replied.

"Oh-ho! Such a talk! I will make-believe when we meet if my father doesn't come. I will smile. Now, turn back, señor, m'sieur—and mister."

"Take my pistol. I have my knife and rifle." She accepted the weapon and entered the cabin.

Natchez was greatly disturbed. His failure to follow General Jackson's orders was as nothing compared to the plight of Captain McCarty's daughter. He roundly cursed the roving Irishman for not keeping the girl with him. There were some white women in Florida, camp followers of rascal bands, or the prey of piratical cruising. He walked slowly back to the circle as several Creek women came up with kettles of boiled chicken. A dozen paces from the circle he halted and took note of a newcomer who had taken his place. He was a fat man, and his round head appeared to rest on his shoulders. His eyes protruded as if forcibly pressed

outward. Despite the heat of the day he wore a blue cloak. The others were watching with much interest to see how the redhead would take the usurpation.

Halting beside the stranger, Natchez said:

"You have taken my place. You saw my rifle."

The round head slowly pivoted, and the bulging eyes seemed to dilate. In a shrill voice, a grotesque contrast to the huge bulk of the man, the stranger inquired—

"Ever hear of Tortuga, young chicken?"

"Aye. What's that got to do with you taking my place while my back is turned?"

"Only this, my mewling kitten. Those who ride ahead of signal smokes shouldn't put themselves forward when a man from Tortuga is in the circle."

Natchez's eyes narrowed. The man knew too much. The questioning glances, exchanged by Razill and White Hand, bespoke a sudden curiosity. Natchez realized that any such line of surmise must be broken immediately. His technique was simple and direct. Seizing the intruder by the neck of his coarse shirt, he violently dragged him back a dozen paces and released him. Like a ball of rubber the man bounced to his feet, with a long curved blade clutched in his fat hand. He emitted a thin shriek of rage as he bounced forward and made a sweep that was intended to disembowel the younger man. Natchez drew back and escaped the blade and, with a kick to the wrist, sent the weapon flying to one side. Picking up his rifle, he warned—

"Don't try any more games on me."

The fellow hesitated, then wheeled about and walked away with a buoyancy that was amazing in one of his weight. There were springs of steel beneath his gross flesh.

"Your soul shall turn blue," mumbled Cherokee Doctor.

"Killa massa white man!" roared Cæsar.

Natchez caught up a heavy silver platter, loot of some pirate, and threw it

against the African's shins. With a scream of pain the man tumbled backward, clawing at his ankles.

"M'sieu' Le Noir is a bad man to kick around," lazily said Razill.

Tattooed Serpent warned—

"White men do bad to fight near Red Stick village."

He was the spokesman for all renegade Creeks, who were now backing the powerful Seminole Nation in a war which was to last as long as did the Revolution, and was to cost America more than twenty millions of dollars before it was won.



THE fat man returned to the group, his bulging eyes blazing with hate. In the Creek tongue he told Tattooed Serpent:

"I have been to your village with gifts for you and your women, great warrior chief. A dog snaps at me. Must your friend run away?"

"Killa massa white man!" bellowed the infuriated African.

Between a bringer of gifts and an empty handed wanderer there could be but one choice.

"Olabalkebiche does not walk between warriors fighting," said the chief, giving his Indian name and answer in the Creek tongue.

With a grunt of satisfaction the fat man, as lively as a spinning top and with a resilience that was remarkable in one so gross, danced lightly toward the Kentuckian, his hooked blade in one hand, his blue cloak wound around his left arm as a shield. Natchez dropped his rifle at the feet of the chief, and said—

"Let Olabalkebiche watch and see I fight only one man."

"Killa massa white man," hoarsely chanted Cæsar, his big frame quivering with excitement.

The chief caught the mad black's gaze and held it for a moment, or until the big fellow turned his head away, and made signs in the air to ward off witchcraft.

Natchez pivoted slowly, watching his

opponent. He sensed great danger in the elasticity of the obese figure. In the back of his mind was a memory of New Orleans gossip concerning a fat man who possessed unbelievable agility. The challenger drifted easily about the wheeling figure of the American, and with a thin, tremulous cry of rage was suddenly upon him, flapping the cloak in a bewildering fashion and lunging with the hooked knife. Natchez nimbly leaped backward, his moccasined feet making no sound; and then he darted forward to seize a corner of the cloak.

Razill shrieked with merriment as he beheld the cloak held up by the American as a curtain and saw the hooked blade slash it to ribbons. Cherokee Doctor favored the pirate. He took a pinch of dirt, and tossed it in the air and blew it toward the American, crying—

"He shall be covered with black earth!"

"Killa massa white man!" exhorted Cæsar, now scarcely able to hold back from joining the fray.

Bouncing lightly from side to side and repeatedly striving to knife the hand still clinging tenaciously to a ribbon of the cloak, the fat man grunted and squealed:

"I'll tell—you was chased here—by smokes. Damn spy!"

Several times he all but had his opponent upon the threshold of death, only to have him slip out of reach. Suddenly the man ceased his gyrations, stepped back and challenged:

"Will you fight, you coward? Or must I run you down and stab you in the back?"

"You never killed any one unless you did stab in the back," taunted Natchez.

"There is a man with a broken neck. He was shot out of a tree. He has been found. It will be easier for you to die on my knife than to be taken apart by the dead man's friends, the Creeks," replied the pirate.

Before Natchez could weight the import of this startling threat a woman was shrieking:

"It's Captain Fan! Run! Run!" The warning was in English touched with brogue.

"Ned McCarty's young wench! Damn him!" screamed the pirate.

The owner of the absurd name leaped forward to make the fatal slash. Natchez deflected the sweeping blow, and his enemy, off balance for an instant, stepped on a trailing rag of his cloak and plunged grotesquely forward on all fours. Instantly Cherokee Doctor was between the two men. He cast a handful of sand at the American's face. The latter instinctively closed his eyes and ducked his head. Snarling like a wild animal, Natchez took the initiative with ferocity, and the swiftness of his thrusts made it appear that his hand was filled with knives.

Captain Fan began puffing and gave ground. Again Cherokee Doctor advanced behind the American, his hand filled with dirt. McCarty's daughter screamed—

"Look out, Americano, for the Indian!"

Natchez landed a back handed blow with his left fist that sent the medicine man sprawling on his back. Captain Fan fell back until he stood beside Caesar.

"Look out for the black!" cried the girl.

Natchez flashed a downward glance in time to avoid being tripped by the man's massive leg. He fainted at Fan and suddenly stabbed the Black Emperor through the calf of the leg. The negro screamed and convulsively threw himself to one side. Captain Fan risked all on the bold effort. He plunged solidly against his foe. The knives locked and were slowly extended toward the brassy heavens. Then followed a test of strength, both figures rigid, with neither man daring to retreat; and each striving his utmost to force the other's blade aside for the fraction of a second.

Captain Fan talked none, now. He bit his thick lips till they bled; and the protruding eyes became the orbs of a frog, set on stalks, as he made his supreme effort. But it was his own blade which was inexorably forced aside. Natchez ceased this maneuver to thrust at

the exposed chest: but his blade was deflected by the pirate's instant counter. They gathered themselves to be at it again, although Fan was dripping with perspiration and obviously tiring.

A long staff fell between them, and Tattooed Serpent stridently commanded:

"Let the men stop fighting, or they shall be ghosts. They are brave men. Why do they kill each other? There are many Long Knives from the Tennessee Fire to kill."

As he talked he was forcing them farther apart, Fan giving ground willingly and breathing with a whistling note. The favor of the chief was with the pirate. The Serpent continued:

"There was something said about a man and smokes. The smokes have gone away. The man is dead. Olabalke-biche's ears are open. He will hear about the dead man."



NOW Natchez cursed his ill luck in leaving Fan alive to tell about the would-be assassin. It would have been disastrous to have Tattooed Serpent an enemy. There would be no escaping his wrath once he learned about the dead Creek. There was no course open to him, however, except to turn away with his tired arm at his side. He now beheld the girl for the first time since her intrusion on the scene. As he met her gaze, and was wondering if the two of them could make their escape before the pirate told about the dead Creek, she pointed and opened her mouth to cry an alarm.

Before she could utter a sound he had whirled about, just as Captain Fan, screaming like a wildcat, hurled himself forward. The hot sunlight seized and held the two blades as they came together. There was the sound of steel rasping against steel. The American stepped to one side a trifle, and the spectators glimpsed a short, jabbing motion; then he was clear of his man, watching and waiting.

Captain Fan's eyes filled with blackness. His fat arms dropped helplessly.

With a little cough he bent forward as if to advance, fell heavily on his face and lay still.

Exhausted by his efforts, Natchez staggered back and inhaled rapidly to satisfy his protesting lungs. He watched the pirate to make sure his short jab had gone home. Razill came forward and kneeled beside the rotund figure and felt for a heart beat. He did not suspect his friend had caught the knife. As he withdrew his hand he stared blankly at the red smear on his palm. Then he said to White Hand—

"The fat fool is actually dead—killed by a boy!"

Natchez drove his knife into the ground and looked for Señorita McCarty. She was not in sight. Cherokee Doctor harangued Tattooed Serpent, and pointed menacingly at the victor. But the chief possessed a rudimentary sense of justice. Also the bringer of gifts was dead. Turning to Natchez the chief said in English:

"Go. Go white town."

"I'll be killed if caught outside a white town?" asked Natchez. The chief bowed his head. Then the American asked, "Where is Señor McCarty?" The chief shook his head.

With a wink at White Hand Razill spoke:

"McCarty's on the East Coast Amelia Island."

Natchez believed he was lying. The island, formerly the favorite haunt of outcasts and worse, was captured by General Gaines in the preceding December. There would be no reason for the Irish adventurer to go there. Natchez again asked the chief to tell him of McCarty's whereabouts. This time the Serpent pointed south. Then, touching Natchez's arm, he pointed north.

"He says for you to go," said Razill. "But the smokes will chase you and catch you."

"How much time do I have?" asked Natchez. —

The chief understood English better than he spoke it. He pointed to the sun,

halfway down the western sky, and brought his hand level to the horizon. Caesar threw back his head and showed his big teeth in a paroxysm of laughter, and shouted—

"Killa massa white man!"

Natchez picked up his rifle and walked to the cabin. Halting before it, he called out:

"You must go back to the place where I found you. We have until sunset before they will take up the chase."

The girl came forward and sharply reminded him:

"But it is not a white town, Señor Natchez. I saw the fight. It was horrible—it was wonderful. We must find a white town where any fugitive is safe."

"You must go back where the Serpent's authority protects you," Natchez insisted. "It's the pirate scum I'm fearing on your account."

"And you will keep on north, señor?"

"I must find your father before I go north."

"But you can not. Who knows where he is? He tells me he is going to Havana. He changes his mind and writes for me to join him at New Orleans. He is a very bad boy, Señor—Mister Natchez. Get my horse ready."

"You will ride north," he insisted. "To the Serpent's town."

"*Si?* My *caballero* will ride where I lead. We will make for a white town. My father is somewhere down here. When we find him this trouble will be ended. He may be at Señor Blate's trading house near the Hacha Hallowaggi. *Quien sabe?*"

To communicate with Blate was an important part of Natchez's business. Caesar would have to wait. The delivery of Jackson's letter to McCarty must needs wait until that individual could be located. The surest way of locating him would be to remain with the girl. She now added:

"There is a Seminole town on the Hacha Hallowaggi, near Blate's trading post. The chief will protect you because

"I, the daughter of my father, ask it." She spoke with superb confidence.

There was death for him if he rode north. There was worse than death for the girl did he leave her outside the Serpent's town. And their flight would be regulated by the poor speed she could make. In ten minutes the two were mounted and riding to the east. Razill approached near enough to wave *adieu* mockingly. Behind him crouched White Hand, in pantomime collecting fuel for a fire and lighting it to make a smoke. Out of sight, but very audible, Cæsar was bellowing—

"Killa massa white man!"

An even more sinister sign of activity was Cherokee Doctor's appearance with three huge dogs on a leash. These he held back by snubbing the cords around the red post. He gave no heed to the fugitives, but faced the west and waited for the sun to touch the horizon.

CHAPTER III

THE ROAD OF THE OLD PEOPLE

ONCE they were out of sight of the trading post Natchez took time to observe his companion more closely. He was disturbed by her finery, which included a tiny jeweled fan that was worn as a comb.

"Your eyes forget their manners, señor," she said.

"Miss McCarty, it's your highfalutin gown, and that doo-dad in your hair." Every Injun we meet will remember you all his life. You must change your clothes."

"What!" It was an exclamation, rather than a query. Natchez quickly explained:

"Something that isn't so colorful; something better suited for travel. We do not wish to be noticed."

"Sí? Garments made from the lint of the mulberry, pawpaw and elm; and trimmed with turkey feathers." She spoke mockingly.

Natchez nodded and said:

"The very thing. At the first cabin we come to you try to trade for such a rig, and stuff that fancy gown in the bag. And your hair—do it different. Don't do it at all. Let it hang down, careless-like."

She loosed a torrent of Spanish, and although he was unable to understand scarcely any of it, her tone and bearing told him she was displeased.

Nevertheless when they came to a cabin she slid to the ground before he could offer to assist her and went inside. Natchez noted the position of the sun and then had time to wonder at the road they were following. It was a strip of what once had been a broad, noble highway, its surface suggesting crushed shell. A quarter of a mile to the rear it vanished under the lush vegetation. A half mile ahead it similarly vanished. Natchez was no antiquarian, yet he knew the ancient thoroughfare represented a stage of culture far above that of the aborigines. He was lost in his speculations when his companion emerged from the cabin. She was much changed. She wore a short brown skirt, made from the inner bark of the pawpaw, a doeskin jacket and leggings of the same material, and a cape of turkey feathers. He was afoot to help her mount.

"I am a squaw. I will walk and carry my burden."

He picked her up, settled her in the saddle and fastened the bag of clothing to his blanket roll. When they had traveled some distance he told her:

"You made a good trade. Did the woman ask questions?"

"The hut was empty," she coldly replied. "I left my fan as pay."

"Damnation!" Natchez mumbled.

Her eyes flew open, and she told him:

"I am displeased. I will turn back. What do you mean?"

"The jeweled fan! Every native in the country will identify it as belonging to you. My fault. I should have warned you . . . I wish this road would last throughout our journey."

She shivered slightly, as if cold, and in a low voice warned:

"This is a bad luck road. —It's the Road of the Old People. There are many places, my *caballero* father says, where you find stretches of it—just as you'll find ancient forts which the Indians never built. We must find a trail and leave it."

"Unfortunately it leaves us. We'll travel faster if you can stand it."

Natchez turned to note the position of the sun. A sudden yapping sound, like that of a small dog, caused him to start violently. The girl laughed, the transformation becoming her mightily. Then she explained:

"It's a small green frog. He tries to talk like a puppy dog. He is very funny, that Señor Puppy Frog."

The Kentuckian was in no mood to appreciate the humorous. There were dogs behind them that would do no yapping; large, panther-like brutes, trained to run down human game. The long shadows from the western growth became merged with the general twilight, and Natchez knew the sun was slipping into the waters of the Gulf and that the chase was on. The girl caught something of his fear and lifted her mount into a gallop and raced rapidly ahead, taking the turns of the Old People's road at reckless speed. He endeavored to overtake her, but her mount was too fleet. Cursing the Floridas, his bad luck, and the whims of all women, Natchez pushed on. On making an abrupt turn around a thicket where the ancient highway took to earth and lost itself in a swamp, he found her waiting for him. She pointed to the west. Smoke signals, like those that had advertised his journeying south from Crow Town, were talking to the hostiles ahead of him.

Where the ancient road once led south, and presumably over high, dry land, was now a bowl shaped depression filled with stagnant water and water grasses. What trees grew in this area were covered with hanging moss and air plants. The native trail skirted this toward the east and then turned sharply to the south.

"A very long time ago different people lived here," said the girl, speaking in a

whisper as if fearing to disturb the sleep of the ancients. "Some old roads in Mexico are like this— Look—there is a fort!"

Startled, and expecting to behold a modern fortification, Natchez looked about him. The girl seized his hand, pointed along the trail to the east, and then he discovered it, all but concealed by a riot of vegetation. He beheld something his companion had missed—a native hut that blended well with the foliage of trees and was further concealed by climbing vines.

In the west sounded a bell-like note, but more sinister than musical. Natchez knew the horizon had sliced the sun in two and that Cherokee Doctor and his man hunters were on the trail.

"Damn him, he cheated!" he exclaimed as he motioned for the girl to follow the trail. "He never waited for the sunset."

Her face revealed her fear, but her voice was casual as she asked—

"We must fight the dogs, Señor Natchez?"

"I must. You stay where I say and do as I say." He slipped from the saddle and darted inside the hut. She would have followed him, but he directed, "Ride on to the opening of the old fort." Instead of obeying she waited until he emerged, and her eyes grew round as she beheld several fish spears under his arm.

"Happened to see one of these through the opening," he explained. "Now for that fort."

This ancient defense consisted of three walls, the one facing the trail being broken by a narrow opening. There had been a fourth wall, but it had succumbed in ages past to the sinking of the land. The swamp, however, was as durable a barrier as any walls of stone. Inside this enclosure the growth was thick.

"It does not look safe, señor. We must ride on," the girl objected.

"They've unleashed the dogs," Natchez rapidly told her. "They'll be on us any minute. They can get at us only by that narrow opening. Get along! Get along!"

He drove her through the opening and

ordered her to stand back and hold the horses. He examined his pistol and rifle, placed them on a ledge of rock and picked up the spears. There was no further sound from the dogs. For several minutes the two fugitives stood in silence; then the girl spoke, saying:

"I do not believe the pack is near. We should ride."



NATCHEZ was kneeling in the opening, his eyes fixed on the sharp bend in the trail where the road of the Old People ran into the swamp. In a low voice he announced:

"Here they come. Three of them and a bloodhound."

They were big, tawny brutes. The hound's business was limited to following the trail and showing the huge creatures their prey. The hound, nosing the ground, ran to the edge of the swamp, swung his head about and then came toward the fort. Natchez struck his knife in the ground, dropped on one knee and poised a spear. Over his shoulder he directed—

"Take the pistol, but do not shoot unless one gets by me."

After sounding his discovery cry the hound swerved to one side and lolled on the ground, waiting for the finish. Like a thunderbolt the leader of the man killers hurled himself into the opening, only to drop and writhe convulsively on the head of a spear. With no lessening of their fury the two remaining beasts came on. Natchez's second lunge was successful, but the third brute was upon him. He felt the jaws of the beast at his neck, and was deafened by a loud explosion.

"I had to shoot, Señor Natchez," panted the girl. "It did not seem good to obey orders and wait longer."

Somewhat dazed Natchez staggered to his feet and seized the pistol and, despite his shaken nerves, managed to reload it. Then he said to his companion—

"You're great!"

He snatched up his long rifle and sighted along the barrel at the hound.

That tracker had decided he had led quitters to battle. He was streaking over the homeward trail when the crisp crack of the rifle ended his career as a pilot.

The fugitives took to horse and made the best of the waning light.

"What next, Mr. Natchez?" the girl asked.

"We must get out of this trap," he told her. "We must make Blate's post."

Her small oval face became pathetic, like an injured child's. She murmured:

"My father—I wish the grand *caballero* Ned McCarty was here. All would be well then."

She little dreamed that her companion was there because this same *caballero* McCarty was in Florida and, supposedly, up to mischief.

After following the trail for several miles Natchez decided they must seek lodgings for the night. He told the girl they would stop at the first cabin. She made no response; but when they arrived at a cabin and found it deserted, she remained in the saddle and stared at him through half closed lids. He dismounted and pulled aside the cane curtain and in the white moonlight observed that the interior, like all the Seminole houses, was neat and orderly. Returning to the girl, he handed her his long pistol, and told her:

"You get this idea into your silly head, señorita. I'm down here on business. It was my wish that you ride north to the Serpent's town, where you would be safe. You refused. Understand that I have no interest in you, except that you're a woman who quit the protection of a powerful chief to run the risks of the trail. Take a nap—siesta. We can't travel over a strange trail in the night. And the horses need rest. There is smoked meat and hard bread in the pack. Eat something . . ."

After a rest that did them good, Natchez and Isobella McCarty pushed on, their refreshed mounts putting long miles behind them effortlessly. Natchez rode in silence, and the girl, appearing to

be somewhat intimidated by his manner, did likewise.

A Red Stick village was close by Blate's trading post and Natchez got his first sight of a Seminole known by him to be such, before he was well within the boundaries of the post. The man was none other than Hillis Hadjo, better known among whites as Francis the Prophet, now at the height of his spectacular career. He was a splendid, erect figure of a man.

The chief had but recently returned from England, where he had received much attention. Among his gifts was a suit of red and gold and a tomahawk, inlaid with gold. English traders had persuaded him that the Treaty of 1814 provided for the restoration of all the lands anciently claimed by this offshot of the more powerful Lower Creek Nation. As a result he was very bitter toward all Americans.

Natchez and Isobella McCarty were scarcely across the threshold of the post before tall Seminoles were gathering to learn their identity. Blate, the trader, noticeable because of his long, sad face, and the skeleton build of his lank figure, was behind a counter, busily trading silver for gold with a Seminole man. He ceased his dickering when his gaze rested on Isobella McCarty. Wonder and admiration were reflected in his somber eyes. He bent with exaggerated politeness over the counter. The girl inclined her head slightly and stepped aside for Natchez to do the talking.

The Kentuckian inquired—

"Is this Israel Blate, keeper of this post?"

The tall man nodded, his gaze still on the girl.

Natchez fished out two papers and gave him one. The man tore it open, with frequent side glances at the girl. As he read the few lines his expression changed. He smiled affably, shook hands with Natchez and glanced inquiringly at Isobella. Natchez presented him to her and, on learning she was Ned McCarty's

daughter, Blate fairly radiated geniality. He escorted the two of them to the privacy of the store room, and called out for a lad to stay back of the counter.

"My father—where is he?" asked the girl.

Blate was confused for a moment and glanced questioningly at Natchez. The latter frankly explained:

"We've lost Ned McCarty. He isn't at St. Marks. We expected to find him here."

"So he was, my friend. So he was. But he went south to some Seminole villages among the cypress swamps. He went to trade silver for gold."

"Aren't you putting the cart before the horse?" asked Natchez.

"But a white man never would trade gold for silver," Blate replied. Then he explained, "The Seminoles have a passion for the white metal. Neither is used for money. The Indians prefer silver for ornaments. Piece for piece, they trade even."

"But where do they get the gold?" asked Natchez.

"No white man knows. But they get it somewhere. Who were the Old People? The red tribes only know their roads and forts are here. White folks know the roads were built a very long time ago; long enough back to have vanished under swamps. Perhaps they brought in the gold; brought it from the west from South America, or Mexico. They might have been the Incas, or the Aztecs. Perhaps they brought huge stocks of gold here to keep it from the Spaniards. Possibly the Seminoles have happened upon caches of the yellow metal. White traders care very little where it comes from so long as they can trade silver for it, ounce for ounce.

Your father, miss, trading independent, may have stumbled upon the secret of its source. He may have located a store of it which the Seminoles know nothing about. Possibly that is why he traveled south at a time when the Seminoles are at war with the United States. He was here one day. He was gone the

next. He took none of the usual trade stock. That shows he isn't bound for any Creek town. He did take along a pack-horse load of silver . . .

"Friend Natchez, I heard from a cross-country runner about you being in a Red Stick Village near St. Marks." The trader's eyes asked many questions, as did his side glances at the girl.

"Señorita McCarty was there with me," explained Natchez. "I had a fight with Captain Fan."

"It was you who killed him!" exclaimed Blate.

"He killed, señor, to save his own life," sharply said the girl.

"I was merely wondering how such an accomplished fighter could be whipped by one who is too young to have learned all the tricks."

"He is a very brave *caballero*," said the girl, her head high and her voice haughty.

"Mr. Blate," Natchez said in some confusion, "as soon as I can place this young lady under her father's protection, I shall go back to the man in Nashville, who sent you that message. I will carry your answer."

"It will be ready." Blate pursed his thin lips and nodded his long head as he added, "Yes. The answer should go back. It is important. It is true the young lady's business rather presses, but it need not detain you. She will be perfectly safe here under my protection until her father returns."

"I have only great thanks for you, señor. But I have made myself a nuisance to one man; that is enough," spoke up the girl.

"But his duty calls him away. He should ride hard."



THE girl tilted her head insolently and with a sidelong glance at Natchez, which made him squirm, asked—

"Has Señor Natchez any duty above being my *caballero*?"

Natchez stared at her helplessly for a bit, then grinned broadly, and replied:

"The United States worried along

without my help until the fighting at New Orleans. I'm sure it can live on a bit longer. I'm positive I shall not leave you until I know you are safe."

"I understand, my friend. But if I find my news can't wait, I must send it by another messenger," Blate warned.

Natchez said nothing, finding himself in a dilemma. He remembered Jackson's advice—rather, commands. But the girl placed both slim hands on his arm and said:

"Oh, Señor Natchez. You are my *caballero*. You are wonderful!"

"Flies eating sugar," mumbled Blate. To Natchez he said sternly, "Stick very close to this post, my friend. Hillis Hadjo, the Prophet, will hoist your red hair to the top of a red stick if you wander from this place. That is, unless a certain *shaman*, just arrived, acts as your friend."

"I have no friends down here, except the señorita and yourself, if you will let me count you as such."

"To the hilt!"

"Who is this newcomer you speak of?"

"Cherokee Doctor. He has seen blood on the moon by the way he acts."

Natchez thought rapidly, and then confided in the trader, telling him of the chase and the death of the dogs.

"Your hair will be in the smoke, and then up a pole unless you can get away tonight. You killed a medicine man's medicine dogs," gravely warned Blate. "Even I can't save you. Consider this back room yours. There is another behind the counter which I also use as a store room. It's nearly empty, awaiting the arrival of Arbuthnot's schooner. The young lady can have that."

"And you? Where will you sleep?" asked Natchez.

"In the trade room; anywhere. In the village."

The lad behind the counter loudly called for Blate to show himself, as chiefs were close to the door. The trader gestured for his guests to keep back and indicated several peep-holes in the wall. He went out and locked the door behind

him. The girl was the first to spy on the newcomers. In a frightened whisper she said—

"Razill!"

"And White Hand," murmured Natchez.

"What terrible beasts!"

A deep, booming voice shouted—

"Killa massa white man!"

"Caesar and the two white men. They must know we're here, or the black wouldn't be shouting that stuff— Hello! Looks like some religious ceremony. Each is carrying a small red flag."

Isobella leaned heavily against the wall and asked—

"Don't you know what that means— among pirates?"

"Can't know. I never was a pirate."

"No quarter! That's what it has meant ever since the first freebooter sailed into this part of the world."

"There's Cherokee Doctor. He has no flag."

"He is sprinkling black earth ahead of him. He is sending you to death," she explained.

"He tried that game with his dogs. I still live," grimly reminded Natchez.

The girl crept along to stand beside him. She clutched his arm and whispered: "You must go away—tonight. I'll go with you."

Natchez whispered softly for silence. Such a warning scarcely was necessary. Tattooed Serpent was crowding ahead of the two white men and the black. In the Creek tongue he announced—

"Olabalkebiche wants a white woman and a white man."

Blate talked low and hurriedly and gesticulated much. The Serpent's strong features betrayed nothing of his thoughts as he listened. When Blate ceased speaking the perspiration from his tanned forehead. Caesar bellowed like a bull and attempted to thrust his big figure through the doorway. The trader snatched up an ax helve and struck him a mighty blow on the head. The black halted, staggered a bit, then showed his big teeth in an

animal snarl. Instantly he found himself between Razill and White Hand, and each was holding a knife while Razill talked rapidly.

"Killa massa white man!" roared the huge black, but he made no further attempt to enter the post.

Blate advanced from the door, herding the trio ahead of him. It was a quarter of an hour before he returned. He was mopping the sweat from his head and face. Stepping behind the counter, he filled a small dipper with New England rum and dashed it off as if it were so much water. Then he rejoined his guests, his deeply tanned face creased with new wrinkles. And he abruptly announced in a voice fraught with sincerity:

"If you stay here tonight, Natchez, you will lose your life, and the girl will lose hers. If you steal away after dark you may save yourself. You surely will make it possible for me to save the young lady."

"I'm not scared of the pirates. I'll fight them," said Natchez. He arose from a bale of goods upon which he had been sitting and began to pace up and down the floor in front of the trader. "No," he went on determinedly, "no cowardly bunch of cutthroats are going to make me run."

"The one I fear is Tattooed Serpent. You can't fight him without fighting the whole Creek Nation. Now I can outfit you with some Spanish clothes and you can get away. I'll have a horse picketed nearby for you to ride. McCarty will soon be back. He will find his daughter here, waiting for him. By riding north all night you can strike the Alabama line far ahead of the Creeks and Razill's band. I have an important message for you to deliver to General Jackson.

"I'll break open a case of Spanish finery. You must look like a grandee. I'll leave the case in here for you to select from. I will bring food in for your supper. When it gets dark you must ride for it."

"He shall ride," the girl gravely assured the trader. "Even if it be over the rim of life, he shall ride."

CHAPTER IV

FLIGHT

BLATE was soon back with a big case of Spanish goods. He said quickly:

"You should find all you need in this consignment. Here is a package of dried meat and bread. And last, here is my message to General Jackson. I will have the boy picket your horse near the window. I will call a council of the chiefs. While we're engaged you go through the window and be off. The house will be between you and the council, and the darkness gathers. Men in Spanish rigs down here are not so noticeable as northerners in hunting shirts and leggings. The señorita will retain this room. I will vouch for her safety. The counter lad is to be trusted. When you find McCarty send him back to his daughter. But as you prize your scalp, lose no time in getting out of this territory. Don't waste precious time hunting for McCarty. He is sure to turn up in good time."

The trader shook hands with Natchez and was about to return to the long room, when the girl said:

"Señor Blate, my friend must have a spare horse. If pressed hard he will be run down."

"A very sensible suggestion, señorita. Two animals will be picketed close by the window."

With that Blate departed, locking the door behind him.

The girl was more curious to examine the bundle of clothing than was Natchez. She talked almost incessantly, in a very low voice, and said nothing of much importance. In a half whisper she exclaimed—

"Ah, the brave *chaqueta*!" She held up to the fading light of the high window, a short jacket, elaborately embroidered with gold braid and adorned with barrel buttons. "And here is the sombrero. See the tinsel cord? How big and audacious!"

"Aye! But what's this thingumbob?" grumbled Natchez, for a moment unable

to identify the article, as the outer part of the legs were open from hip to bottom to permit of an insertion of crimson silk. Rows of tinkling, gold washed buttons decorated the edges of the long insertions.

"*Calzoneras*," the girl modestly explained.

"Pantaloons. Long breeches," Natchez growled. "All this lace and pretty braid are so much nonsense."

"Such talk! But it makes me think of my father."

"See here, señorita, I don't at all like this idea of leaving you."

"You will be the grand *caballero* . . . Ah, here is the *serape saltillero*!"

"Too fancy for a blanket," gloomily commented Natchez. "What would your father think if he knew I was leaving you?"

"He would say you were foolish to stay here and get killed . . . You should have a gay saddle, heavy with silver. But that is not— There, señor, you have the dress of the *rico* . . . I shall be safe here. It grows dark in this room. Step behind the bale of trade goods and become a chivalrous *caballero*."

"It's all wrong—I can't leave you. I'll shift to these crazy duds and feel like a fool, but I'll not leave you, señorita."

Natchez retired to the privacy afforded by the pile of merchandise and with much soft cursing managed to exchange his rifle dress for the picturesque attire of a Spanish gentleman. Shamefaced because of his finery, he sullenly emerged—and with a grunt of surprise leaped forward to seize the intruder.

A small hand placed against his breast in restraint checked him. He gaped in amazement. The señorita had vanished, and in her place stood one who was garbed likewise in the dress of a Spaniard, only the material was cheap velveteen, while the hat was of palm leaf.

"Good Lord! What have you done señorita? What madness are you up to?" Natchez whispered.

"Hush! We ride together. You a grandee; I a *villageois*, what you call lower

class. We will ride while Señor Blate holds the chiefs in council. They will look for us in the north. We will ride south. My mother's people will be welcome among the Seminoles. This is a Spanish province. My father is in the south."

"They'll find your woman's gee-gaws."

"I shall pack them along in a stout bag. We will be a grand señor and his servant."

It was dusk in the room, and the shadows were gathering outdoors. There came a soft rap on the door, and the girl scuttled behind the merchandise. But Blate did not enter. In a low voice he asked—

"Are you ready, Natchez?"

"I am ready. When do I go?"

"When the boy taps twice on the door. I'm hurrying back to the council. Have no fears for the safety of the señorita."

"I know she will be in safe hands. My spare horse is ready too?"

"Yes."

Ten minutes passed and then came two soft taps on the door. Natchez caught up the girl and thrust her, feet first, through the window. She caught the sill, steadied herself, and dropped lightly to the ground. Her bundle of clothing quickly followed. Natchez passed out his weapons and swung himself through the opening. The girl was in the saddle. He handed her the bundle, secured his arms, and mounted. They rode to the east and struck an ancient trail. Natchez did not call a halt until he estimated they had covered a score of miles. While they were resting he asked:

"What are those white things? They look like tents?"

"White walls. Work of the Old People, dead and gone these many ages. I am afraid of what I do not understand. Their ghosts may be watching us."

After a suitable rest period they resumed their flight. They passed the rocks, or walls, without pausing to inspect them, and struck into a section of what in ancient times had been a highway. They followed it for several miles over rolling lands, thickly grown with

timber. When it was necessary to halt in earnest, to eat and sleep, Natchez announced that they had covered thirty or more miles since leaving the trading post. It was evening when they resumed their journey.

They had proceeded a few miles when the girl touched his arm and reined in. A dog was barking. Other dogs joined in the chorus. With nerves tingling Natchez said—

"We must be close to an Indian village."

"Then I'm fearfully afraid." The girl crossed herself and murmured prayers.

"We are Spaniards," Natchez stoutly encouraged. "The Indians are not at war with Spain."

"I see a light!"

He too beheld it—a faint, rosy glow. "It's a village," he decided. "We can't stay in hiding."

"If it's a Seminole town, not a Red Stick town, I'll go and ask for my father!"

Natchez knew they must encounter and make friends with some of the aborigines, but he had no idea whether they were Seminole or Creek camp-fires. The problem was solved for them by the sudden appearance of a man in the road close by. And such a man! The girl gave a cry of amazement. Natchez was nonplused. The man was an Indian and he stood nearly seven feet in height, and was beautifully proportioned. Crescents of shining metal hung from his neck and wrists. His girdle was similarly decorated, as was his turban shaped head covering.



THE girl addressed him in Spanish. He answered and came closer, and asked who they were. The girl explained and described her father. The man's interest quickened. He said such a man was farther south. He interrupted the girl's joyful exclamation by motioning them to follow him. Whether guide or captor he did not once look back as he led them close to several fires.

"May all the holy saints protect us!" whispered the girl, as she gazed at the strange company.

Instead of Indian fires, it was a camp of white men. Natchez inwardly shuddered as he gazed at the group. They were in the firelight, while the fugitives and leader were in the heavy shadows. The men were shouting, cursing, and singing. Natchez assumed this villainous company was composed of cattle dealers, slave hunters, traders, smugglers and pirates: for such was the riff-raff which the States, the West Indies, and foreign countries were sending to Florida. Spain was unable to keep them out. Some distance from this vicious gathering stood the temporary camp of the Indians. It was to the latter that the giant led the way.

The thatched roofs and sides of the Seminole camp were revealed by the light from several small fires. The Seminole halted before an isolated structure and called softly. A young girl wrapped in a blanket emerged. The man spoke to her briefly, then gave the white girl a gentle push and gesture for her to enter the dwelling. Over her shoulder Señorita McCarty softly told Natchez:

"He's a wonderful man. He knows I am a woman. I'll be myself in the morning, please God!"

As she disappeared with her young escort the Indian turned to Natchez and gestured for him to join the men at the camp-fire. Cradling his long rifle in the hollow of his left arm, with his knife and pistol thrust through the broad red sash, Natchez slowly advanced to the nearest fire and, with a bow to right and left, seated himself. Sharp eyes, stealthy eyes, savage eyes were fastened upon him. He waited for the keynote of his reception to be sounded. It came with the abruptness of a blow. The man on his immediate left leaned forward, insolently stared into his face and exclaimed—

"A damned greaser!"

The Kentuckian's reaction was immediate. His left arm was hooked around the swarthy neck and the fellow was vio-

lently jerked off balance, with his head receiving a tremendous short arm blow from the bronzed knuckles. It was done so quickly in the fickle light that none seemed to realize just how it was accomplished until the man's inert figure fell to one side. Then Natchez fished some meat from a kettle and ate it. After wiping his hands on some dry grass he glanced idly at the prostrate figure and remarked—

"A wonderful night, gentlemen."

"The best knife fighter atween here and Louisiana is coming to his senses and will get a reckoning with you," spoke up a long haired man with the face of a wolf.

"You're mistaken, señor. I'm the best knife fighter," Natchez blandly corrected.

Inwardly he was worrying about Ned McCarty's daughter, and he knew full well it was no time to display indecision, let alone weakness. The man who belittled his own prowess was doomed. None of the circle showed any derision of the broad boast. Each studied the newcomer critically. Could he make his talk good he would be very welcome.

The fellow Natchez had knocked senseless rolled over and came to a sitting posture, and for a few moments stared blankly at the silent, watchful circle. Then his gaze rested on Natchez. Instantly he had oriented himself. He bared his teeth at Natchez and cried:

"Caught me off guard. Now let's see what your greaser's knife is made of!"

Natchez was erect without appearing to have moved a muscle. Wolf-face's eyes narrowed, and he wriggled his bare toes and watched sharply. Shifting his gun to the back of his sash and throwing off his fine coat, Natchez said—

"If you attack me I shall surely kill you."

"Backing water!" cried a deep voice.

"You don't want any of my knife fight. Keep away and you'll live longer. If you think different, I am ready. Come on." Natchez's voice was ominous.

The fellow was prompt enough to ad-

vance, but he was puzzled by the stranger's nonchalant assurance. He pulled off his coarse shirt and wound it around his left arm and wrist. His chest was heavily tattooed, and the designs suggested that he had been a blue water man before taking to outlawry ashore.

"So you're a pirate, if that skull and bones mean anything," Natchez continued. "I, too, am flying the red flag tonight. Better haul off."

The metaphor, borrowed from Isobella McCarty's talk, caused several buccaneers to scowl heavily in an attempt to recall such a dashing blade.

"Look out for him, Hob. He's up to tricks," warned Wolf-face. "He's got his battle lanterns lit."

"Lay my share of the loot that my steel finds his innards in two thrusts."

"Done 'n' done, says Old Jack!" cried a man with long white hair and beard.

"Jack, I've said I'd slit your wizen along of your dirty tricks at Panama when the Lima ship come up with the soldiers' pay. That was a goodish bit ago, but I allers keep my word," said Natchez's adversary. He stood rotating his knife before him, his leg muscles flexed for a leap forward or backward.

"Kill him, Spaniard!" growled Old Jack.

Natchez wasted no time in gestures. He strode forward, his knife hand at his side; and as he came within reach of the sea bully the latter loudly exhaled his breath and quickly advanced his right foot, crouching low like a fencer, and drove his knife ahead of him. Swerving his body just enough to escape the thrust, Natchez slashed the swarthy wrist. Then he stepped back and told his opponent:

"You are bleeding to death. Better stop and do up your arm. I don't want to knife a man whose veins are empty."

The pirate took a step backward and stared at his wounded arm. The stranger had exaggerated none. Old Jack, across the circle, howled like a wolf, and then cried—

"Dig in and finish him, Spaniard!"

Natchez waited, his bold gaze searching each face in the desperate circle. One or two eyed him with open admiration. The others lowered sullenly and waited. The pirate thrust his knife back into his belt and clamped a hand around his wrist, saying as he did so—

"Can't go on."

Instantly Old Jack was on his feet and stabbing at him furiously.

"You're just right for me now, my bully!" he shrilled.

This ferocity was nauseating, although displayed by wolves. The pirate yelped at the bite of the old man's steel; then he was fighting back while his life ebbed away. The two rolled over and over, stabbing and grunting. When they ceased their mad struggle the pirate was dead; on top of his wounded antagonist. Wolf-face snarled and showed his big teeth and complained:

"Somebody's got to bury him. Don't want Sem'noles to know he's quit our mess."

"You're the man!" cried Natchez. This time his pistol instead of his knife leaped from his sash. "Your pay will be the loot he has on him."

No man offered to interfere. Their cruel curiosity continued. Wolf-face lowered savagely, then dragged the dead man to a stretch of white sand; where he took his perquisites and acted the part of grave digger.

"You'd make a good leader," spoke up a man whose once fair skin was baked to a mahogany color by the tropical sun. The others talked with their eyes, and a low bow of affirmation swept around the circle. The speaker continued, "You'll have the captain's lay. Injuns in that village have swapped gold for silver. We didn't have silver enough. They have a stock of gold in that camp. We plan to watch till they visit it and then hoist the red flag. Every one gets the knife. None left to blab."

"I'm more interested in knowing where they get their gold," lazily said Natchez. "What few nuggets they fetched up here is nothing to what's in the mine."

"Don't come from no mine," eagerly explained Wolf-face. "Mostly the size of pieces-of-eight. The likes been found in ruins in Old Mexico. Must come over a trade path to the Floridas before any whites was in America. Let's go over the gangplank now! Kill every one but the young wenches."

"Are you the leader?" asked Natchez. The man had no answer. Natchez continued, "If worth doing it's worth doing well. Rubbing out a village for a few pieces of gold is a trifling business. I left my horse in the village. I'll sleep there tonight. I want to know where the gold comes from. We'll talk about it in the morning."

"Now you've as good as signed on we don't mind saying men are coming from St. Marks," said Wolf-face. "Sailing to the mouth of the Calusahatchee in Arbuthnot's Bahama rum boat. You've heard of Razill?"

"A red seaman? Yes."

"And White Hand?"

Natchez shook his head, not believing it wise to be too well acquainted.

"And there will be others?" he asked.

"A dozen more, all told."

"With you men that should be enough. Now I'll say good night."

To turn his back on the deadly company required an effort. He did halt and turn as Wolf-face called after him, saying—

"T'other blade who rode in with you will cut in with us, of course."

"He always will be by my side," Natchez answered.

The big Seminole stepped before Natchez as he was entering the camp. He said:

"A man was killed. You must talk." In lively pantomime he portrayed what he had seen happening by the outlaws' fire.

Natchez utilized the brilliant moonlight and a patch of white sand in making an outline of the west coast. At the end of five minutes he had managed to convey to the Seminole's fine mind full intelligence of the proposed raid, and showed

the ship sailing for the mouth of the river.

The Seminole gave voice to a low, bird-like note and three men promptly ran to him. A few words, and the men scattered. Within a few minutes the women were silently appearing, carrying packs. McCarty's daughter, sleepily rubbing her eyes, ran to Natchez, who explained the cause of the alarm. Noiseless as shadows the little band filed from the camp. Half a mile south they secured their horses. The girl told Natchez—

"They say you are a chief."

"I am a very sadly worried American," he corrected.

CHAPTER V

REUNION

SOUTH fled the Seminoles and the two whites. Señorita McCarty, from talk with a squaw who spoke Spanish to some extent, had learned considerable about the band while Natchez was fraternizing and fighting with the outcasts. She informed him that the chief was Tall Tiger of the Tiger clan and that he was a fatalist. Only his firm belief that he could not dodge his destiny had induced him to camp so far north while General Gaines was fighting the Indians in East Florida and Jackson was about to invade West Florida. It appeared, from what the girl had gathered from her gossip with the squaw, the chief had sung out of season the Medicine Song. This doomed him to disaster, let him guard himself as he would. The fact that he was drunk on the white man's firewater palliated his offense none.

The trail led through a continuous procession of swamps, ponds, dry land and wet, pool and marsh. The women seemed to be as tireless as the men, but Natchez was glad when a halt was called for rest and food. These stops invariably were at some of the pine "islands," as the slight hummocks dotting the landscape were called. These elevations were insignificant, often rising only a few inches

above the monotonously flat country.

Natchez was surprised at the first of these resting places by Isobella McCarty bringing him a bark platter of bear meat.

"You should not wait on me," he told her. "It is for me to serve you."

"I am a squaw. You are a chief," she explained. "And, señor, if I don't serve you the Indian women will think we are queer . . . Where is Arbuthnot's schooner now?"

Natchez perceived she was nursing a black horror of the ill omened craft. He told her:

"Way up the coast. We'll beat it down to the Calusahatchee even if we walked."

"Not if it has good faring," she insisted. "It sails day and night. You would be out of the Floridas by this time if not for bothering with me."

Natchez's tone was almost rough as he replied:

"Nonsense. I must find your father. I have a message for him from General Jackson."

"Of course you can tell it to his daughter." Her manner was ingratiating.

Natchez shook his head. Isobella stared at him haughtily and turned away. He scarcely had time to marvel at the bundle of perplexities which seem to constitute the nature of the sex before she penitently returned, this time bringing some deer meat. She attempted an apology by explaining—

"It's difficult for Señor McCarty's daughter always to remember she is a squaw."

"You are very wonderful, señorita. Please God we'll soon be out of this restless land."

"My father has no intention of going north."

"You're going north," Natchez quietly told her.

Her eyes were ablaze in a moment.

"I go only where my father goes," she replied.

Natchez's own temper gave a bit and he vowed—

"You're going far from this devil's

brew if I have to pack you along under my arm."

The signal to resume the race against time and the schooner interrupted the argument.

During the hurried journey Natchez came to understand something of the chief's mind, and he discovered he liked and admired the man. The chief at times spoke of his boy, and gave the impression he did not expect to live to see the youth reach manhood.

Natchez's efforts to learn the reason for the Seminoles' partiality for silver over gold procured no concrete information. He did get the idea that the annihilation of the Aztec empire for the yellow metal was known by the Seminoles and had prejudiced them against it. His respect for his red companions deepened when he came to realize how jealously they had preserved the purity of the race. Nature was overkind to them. The climate was sub-tropical. Food was to be had for the taking. Infectious diseases seemed to be unknown. Their physical health was well nigh perfect. Life was so soft for them they easily might have degenerated through inertia if not for their bickerings with other tribes, with Spaniards and Americans.

A runner, sent ahead, had arrived sufficiently in advance of the band to permit the colony to take refuge in the big swamp. There seemed to be no path to this refuge, yet the Indians hesitated none in picking their way to a large "island." The chief's eyes sparkled as he greeted his son, waiting with others at the refuge, but there was no outward demonstration of emotion. He harangued his people, explaining the danger in the north and the floating horror nearing the mouth of the river. He touched on the certainty of his being called to make a "long journey" at any time, and stressed the importance of wise counsel for his son. This reference to the red belief that his unfortunate singing of the Medicine Song out of place and season called for his premature demise was accepted as something which had to be.

He rested his hand on Natchez's shoulder and introduced him as a friend whom his people could trust.

Natchez was disturbed. He was a scout for Jackson, who was sure to consider an invasion of the Spanish territory to be a necessity. It did not seem possible that he could fight this particular band of his country's foes.



THERE followed lazy days of exploring, hunting, feasting, sleeping. The natives seemed to have no cares. Natchez had inquired at the beginning of the flight if the chief knew aught of McCarty's whereabouts, and Tall Tiger had disclaimed any such knowledge. Now, one morning, he came to Natchez and said:

"The Tiger's white brother asked about a white man. There is a white man to the south."

"Does my friend know his name?"

"He is called 'Long Knife Man'." As he spoke the chief measured the length of rapier with his hands.

"What is he doing in the south?"

"He tells the people how to fight the white men."

"Damn him!" murmured Natchez. "What do the people trade for his talk?"

The chief took from his belt pouch a roughly hammered flat plate of gold.

Natchez left the chief and penetrated deeper into the swamp to be alone. McCarty was a typical soldier of fortune, taking his profits where he could. But that he should drill Indians to fight against the United States was black treason. The Irish adventurer, as a member of Lafitte's colony of free rovers, had left Baratania to fight with Jackson against the British at New Orleans. It was impossible to consider the man as being aught but traitorously engaged. That General Jackson surely would hang him, once he learned the truth, and could lay hands on him, was as certain as the sunrise.

On returning to the village Natchez sought the chief and announced his intention of scouting down the river.

The chief instantly approved, and added:

"My son will be a great warrior. It is time he earned a new name. He will go with you."

Already the lad was cunning as a weasel in many ways. But as a partner on a dangerous scout Natchez feared his lust for distinguishing himself might precipitate disaster. However, he could not give voice to his fears. The chief went to find his fiery offspring while Natchez, gloomy of mind, sought Isobella. He found her learning to make Koonti flour. The Koonti roots, containing a large percentage of starch, were cut into small pieces and were pounded to a pulp in a mortar. The latter consisted of holes in a pine log, each hole being the property of some squaw or child. He found the girl very proud to have been pronounced sufficiently proficient to have a mortar allotted to her. She was energetically engaged in pounding with a long pestle when Natchez claimed her attention.

"You don't have to do this," he began.

"Am I a doll? Shall another squaw make the bread my chief eats?" she demanded.

Natchez winced, but did not dare state his preference for Koonti flour made by an expert. He stated his business, and she promptly announced that she would accompany him. It was difficult to make her understand that her participation in the scout was impossible. She would have been even more insistent had he not suggested the possibility of her father's arrival, with no daughter to greet him.

The Tiger's son, itching for perilous endeavors, and a middle aged man were awaiting him. The man was known as the Otter for his ability to remain in the water for long periods of time.

The whole world was sadly out of tune as Natchez took his place in the middle of the craft, and the Otter pushed off with the steering pole.

They covered twenty miles before landing to camp. The Otter aroused his companions early in the morning, but the

journey was not resumed for several hours because an aquatic animal, swimming under water, crossed the river below the boat. As clearly as Natchez could understand, this four footed swimmer, presumably an otter, became a taboo against an immediate departure. Even the chief's son, impatient to count a coup, was content to wait. Finally they were under way, the Otter assisting the current with his pole, and dodging snags, and gliding under fallen timbers in a fashion to cause jealousy even in a Mississippi boatman.

They camped that night on a hummock, but built no fire, as they were within a few miles of the river's mouth. The chief's son went scouting, and practised great stealth and cunning even while within sight of the camp. Although the purpose of the reconnaissance was to reach the mouth of the river as rapidly as possible, the morning found the boy again persisting in scouting the growth. This time he was soon back, his eyes blazing, and his tongue moving so fast it was impossible for Natchez to learn the cause of his emotion. He asked the Otter if the lad was afraid of something. The man nearly exploded with wrath: but the white man was under his protection. He touched the boy lightly on the shoulder, and said— "*Tus-ta-nu-ge*—great hero."

The boy leaped to his feet and motioned for Natchez to follow him.

Natchez rose and the Otter, unwillingly, followed. The boy ran through the lofty pines to a small opening, and dramatically pointed to a *to-hop-ki*, or burial hut, a replica of a Seminole house. Natchez was urged to look within. He saw the black embers at the head and feet of the deceased, symbolic of the fires which had kept the witch birds away for the four days intervening before the spirit could soar to its celestial abode. There was the piece of burned wood in the dead hand, a further protection against *ta-lak-i-clak-o*, or evil birds. The bow and arrows, for celestial hunting, were in their proper place. Natchez could not see that

the grave hut had been disturbed. He asked—

"What is bad?"

The boy fished a flat plate of gold from his tunic and managed to make Natchez understand that similar pieces, belonging to the dead man, had been stolen.



THIS sacrilege was a terrible insult to the entire Seminole Nation. But the chief's son was not done. He led the way to the river bank and pointed to an imprint left by a white man's boot. Against the bank was a mark left by the prow of a boat. Natchez's gaze became clouded as in the footprint he found a partial identification of the vandal. His foot gear were of the Spanish type and much like the boots Natchez was wearing. Natchez called attention to this fact and was glad his boot was too large to fit into the imprint. Only the business before them prevented a search for the grave robber. The Otter said the man had left the tracks several days back. In Natchez's mind was born the suspicion that the miscreant was none other than Señor Ned McCarty, gone gold mad. The three returned to their camp and roasted slices of deer meat on a small fire. Then he drew on the ground with his finger the course of the river, and pointed downstream and said—

"*To-hop-ki* man."

The journey was resumed, with Natchez praying the grave robber would not be overtaken. With reckless haste the Otter sent the boat down the river, escaping snags and dislodged trees by inches. In the bow of the boat squatted the chief's son, his bow and arrow ready. At a bend in the river the Otter gently sent the boat to the bank. The youth glared at him balefully. The Otter touched his fingers to lips and then cupped a hand to his ear. The three listened, and Natchez was the last to catch it—the baying of dogs.

Natchez recognized the note. Often he had heard it in the Southern States when a slave was missing. And there were

slave hunters aboard Arbuthnot's schooner. Running down escaped slaves in the Floridas was a lucrative business.

With signs and his scant knowledge of the Seminole and Spanish tongues, Natchez succeeded in telling his companions that the dogs were chasing a man, and must have come by the big boat owned by Arbuthnot. They knew the trader's name.

The chase grew nearer and apparently was following close along the river bank. Then a figure plunged through the bush browth and leaped madly into the water and floundered desperately to a mass of flotsam in mid-stream, hastily burrowing into the loose débris. The man was a negro and seemed to have used his last ounce of strength in attempting to escape the dogs. The three men were standing on the bank when a bloodhound came whining to the water's edge. Then two huge, ferocious creatures burst into view. The hound gave no heed to the humans, but the brutes made for them instantly. The Indian lad coolly transfixed one with an arrow, while the Otter crushed the skull of the second with his ax.

The negro came ashore, half crazed with fear. He said he had escaped from a schooner at the mouth of the river and that twenty negroes were packed closely in the schooner's hold. These were dying daily, and the fugitive had feigned death and had been thrown overboard and had escaped the sharks. As the white men were carousing at the time he had secured a good start before being spied from the schooner.

Natchez in turn described Cherokee Doctor, White Hand, Razill and Caesar, and the fugitive nodded at each name. Then he was given McCarty's description, and again he bowed his head. The Kentuckian quickly made his decision. He must deliver Jackson's ultimatum to McCarty and complete two-thirds of his business. If luck were with him he would endeavor to finish the remaining third by eliminating Caesar. He told his companions he was descending the river alone to spy on the white men and that they

should return to the camp and warn Tall Tiger of the danger. On a piece of bark he wrote a message to Isobella.

Dear Señorita McCarty: Going down the river alone, hunting for your father. Great danger of white rascals coming upstream. I shall tell them to go south. The chief should shift his camp and keep scouts out. Expect to be back in a few days. With great respect,

—NATCHEZ.

He entrusted this to the Otter and waited until the Indians had concealed the dogs. As the hound persisted in lingering, the Tiger's son killed it with an arrow. Once the Indians had passed from sight, the negro cowering at their heels, Natchez pushed off the boat and floated down the river. He had weighed all risks. He believed Wolf-face and his friends would stand behind him against any inimical move made by Razill and his St. Marks friends. His great concern was the girl's possible discovery of her father's associations with lawless men.

Two miles downstream his meditations were disrupted by the sound of a voice calling. The cry was answered. These should be the men following the dogs. Pushing the boat inshore and securing it with a bark rope, Natchez gained the river trail. A man was loudly bawling—

"Can't find no signs!"

Standing behind a big pine Natchez called out—

"What are you looking for?"

For a half a minute he awaited an answer. Then a voice a short distance away fiercely demanded—

"Who be you?"

"I got here first. Who are you? Show yourself."

"I'm a white man. Your voice shows you're a white man. I'm looking for a runaway nigger. Dogs chased him up this way."

"I heard some dogs. They swung off to the north. I'm on my way to meet Arbuthnot's schooner."

"Why the devil didn't you say so? Hi, Wolf-face! White man here says nigger's making north."

There followed half a minute of si-

lence, then Old Jack came into view, his predatory gaze darting about and searching each bit of cover. Natchez stepped behind the tree and was immediately recognized.



OLD JACK stared dubiously at the Kentuckian for a bit, and then said—

"You pulled out mighty sudden, mister." There was both accusation and suspicion in the statement.

"Yes—they were watching us. They saw the fighting. They were breaking camp when I returned. They'd have killed me as being one of you if they hadn't seen me fight with Hob, the man you finished after I'd slashed his wrist. I had to trail along with them. Couldn't lose the chance of finding where they got their gold."

The mention of Hob caused Old Jack to grin, as one who reviewed a pleasant memory. He candidly admitted:

"I always take any advantage. That's what's kept me alive. We got a rare company downriver. But where's them runaway Injuns?"

"Traveling south."

"Let 'em go it. We got a man on the schooner who knows all about their gold."

"Close your trap!" angrily cried the man still hidden in the growth. Then he emerged. It was Wolf-face. On recognizing Natchez he became somewhat mollified, but insisted, "Times have changed, Jack, since that night we see this young blade. He'll have to be talked over by all our bullies."

"I'm not keen to be your leader," quickly interposed Natchez. "Let the man be captain who knows the most about the gold."

Old Jack grinned evilly and slowly shook his head. Wolf-face explained:

"He's a hothead of an Irishman. He'd never do for a leader. Mebbe one of the bullies from St. Marks will be picked."

Natchez sneeringly remarked—

"Leave a cat to take care of a mouse."

"Just what you mean, my swaggerin' blade?" demanded Wolf-face.

"Why ask foolish questions? Don't you know how the St. Marks men will lose their heads at the sight of gold?"

Wolf-face insisted—

"They'll share up accordin' to what's agreed to on the Book."

"You'd swear such scum on the Bible?"

"Nothing like it to hold a man to his bargain," Wolf-face insisted.

"Why not the Irishman for a leader?" pressed Natchez.

"Along of his fool notions. Says none of the Injuns can be hurt. The bullies promised—but not on the Book. After the Irisher shows the way, and after we're sure we've found it, then a knife'll be planted in his back."

"Shut up, fool!" angrily commanded Old Jack.

"I was just gabbin', mister. Let's be makin' sail."

He led the way down the river, cursing the runaway slave, the dogs, and the world in general. Natchez came last. He was endeavoring to formulate a plan for successfully meeting the crisis which he knew must develop once he faced the ruffianly crew, and especially the men from St. Marks. A shrill whistle ahead caused him to cry out—

"What's that?"

"One-eyed Bart, whistlin' for his dogs. Means fresh meat. They'll come like hell under full sail."

The whistling took on an imperious note. A one eyed man with long, greasy hair, and carrying a slave driver's cruel whip, came from the growth. He was ferociously angry. After Natchez's presence was explained he nodded impatiently and continued:

"Never in all my born days did I ever know them critters to fail either in catchin' a nigger, or answerin' the meat call. I'll whale 'em raw!"

"They've traveled beyond the sound of your whistle," Natchez suggested.

"No, sirree! That nigger didn't have strength to keep goin', even if the dogs wa'n't hot at his heels. They must 'a' been runnin' at sight in less'n no time."

After he had turned back with the three and occasionally sounded his recall signal, his anger faded out, and perplexity and a suggestion of fear took its place.

"Best dogs in the Floridas," he muttered, as if trying to prove a disputed point. "No tricks can fool the hounds. I'd give the price of a likely nigger to know what sort of a come-uppance they snagged into."

He reluctantly turned back with the others to rejoin his mates at the mouth of the river.

The schooner was a dingy looking craft. Smuggler, slaver, pirate and trader had sailed her through many scenes of violence. Her evil record was known from Havana to Barataria. Some of the men were ashore, busy over cooking fires, or taking their ease with tobacco and rum. Some were asleep and some were gambling. The latter, for stakes, wagered crudely shaped rings and crescents of gold and silver. Some dined for thin plates of gold, which were hammered flat by the Aztecs long before Cortez came to Mexico.

Fierce eyes glared at Natchez and his Spanish finery. Those who met him the night that Hob was killed by Old Jack gave him sullen greetings. But the Kentuckian could see nothing of McCarty. He asked Wolf-face where the Irishman could be found. He was told—

"Prob'ly on the schooner, gaming with t'other rakehells."

Natchez stepped into a boat and motioned for Wolf-face to scull him out to the low, dingy craft. The man hesitated, thinking his mates might believe he was acting in a servile capacity. Then the staring dark eyes of the Kentucky man won. With a grunt and mouthful of mumbled oaths Wolf-face took his place and smartly set the boat alongside. A line of men arose from the deck to watch the arrival of what appeared to be a Spanish grandee. When under the schooner's lee Natchez glanced up and was instantly interested in the heads of Cherokee Doctor, Caesar, Razill and White Hand.

CHAPTER VI

NATCHEZ'S MEDICINE

AS THE three men came over the side, Cherokee Doctor opened a small pouch and shook black dust into his skinny hand and blew it toward the Kentuckian. Caesar, less subtle, hoarsely yelled—

"Killa massa white man!"

"Shut up!" roared Wolf-face. "Want to be sold in Cuba?" The black subsided, but his big eyes blazed with hate.

Razill advanced, the thumb of his right hand hooked over the haft of a knife in his gay sash. Natchez took two quick steps to meet him, and the arch-villain of the evil lot came to a halt and leered wickedly. Over his shoulder he told his companions—

"He's turned Spaniard."

"Cut his heart out," grunted White Hand.

Cherokee Doctor, squatting low and hopping like a frog, came forward with more black dust to be blown over the soul of the white man. Old Jack laughed at the grotesque figure. Wolf-face insisted:

"If you folks don't love each other you can fight it out on shore. But the new man don't fight more'n one at a time."

"His soul has turned black!" howled Cherokee Doctor.

With a quick pounce Natchez had him by arm and leg and had tossed him over the side before any one could guess his purpose. For a few moments it was a question whether water or rage would choke the man to death. At the cost of his medicine pouch he kicked ashore and threw himself face down on the sand. The lookers-on believed he was exhausted; whereas, he was like one who believed he had lost his soul.

"Fight, bullies, fight!" yelled those on the schooner.

Those ashore were equally insistent that all differences, whatever they might be, should be settled on land.

Natchez glared at the trio over his shoulder, and told Old Jack:

"I'll fight the black. Any way that you men agree on."

Instantly Razill was screaming:

"El Toro! El Toro! Fight El Toro!"

This suggestion was most popular. The cry spread over the schooner, and was hurled back from the shore. Old Jack mumbled:

"Now you've done it! Why didn't you keep your yap shut?"

"It's the black's best game," Wolf-face added in a matter-of-fact way. "He uses it every time he can trick a man into it."

"What the devil do I care how he fights?" said Natchez.

"That's for you to find out," Wolf-face chuckled.

"On shore! On shore!" roared the rough brotherhood.

Cæsar swarmed over the side, slid down a rope and swarm ashore like a black shark.

Natchez became more cautious. The black was too sure of victory. He deemed it wise to seek information. Of Old Jack, he asked:

"What's the game? This El Toro nonsense?"

"It's the devil's notion of a bullfight. Once you said you'd fight any style, Razill saw his chance to sink you."

"I'm not sunk yet. Explain."

"It's the black's best game. They'll fasten an iron ring around his big neck. To the ring are fixed two long blades—the horns of the bull. They stand upright, by his ears, and reach some seven inches above the crown of his head."

"I see. That's why they call it El Toro," murmured Natchez. "But that doesn't scare me. I'm the *toreador*. I like my part the best."

"If it was a fight in the open. But there's the ring of men, their arms locked together. You can't get out of that ring. If you try, you're tossed back and most likely you'll land on the horns."

"I won't try, I'll meet his rush."

"Meet it with a four-inch blade? Yah!"

"That's different," admitted Natchez.

"Yet it's long enough to let out his murderous life." But now the Kentuckian was grave. He felt he had been decoyed into a trap, with the advantage held by his opponent. He asked, "Just how can he fight? With arms, teeth, legs and the two knives?"

"He can use his legs, but not his hands. He will butt with his head and gore you like a bull."

"He will not."

"Curse all heathens! I'll put a wager on you." He wheeled about and shrilly offered, "A gold cup from old Panama against a hundred dollars in hard money that the *toreador* wins!"

"Taken and taken, and taken again!" cried Razill.

Old Jack's ardor, however, was appeased with the one wager. His ancient face became bleak. He was bitterly regretting any show of partisanship. The Black Emperor would not forget. To further his own safety he slyly whispered to Natchez:

"He'll drop on all fours and try to crowd you against the ring. He can swing around quicker'n a wildcat. He'll keep his head toward you all the time. Or he'll stand on his feet and race you down and butt you with his head, and the two knives will be sticking out from under your shoulder blades."

"Don't scare me any more. Give me the knife and let's have it over with," urged Natchez.

Old Jack and Wolf-face set him on the strand.

There followed the business of fashioning a crude harness to hold in place the iron ring around Cæsar's thick neck. There were slots in the ring, and by means of these the two knives were securely fastened. The blades extended well above the woolly head. Cæsar could not wait to show his agility, but danced and pranced, and hooked his head sideways and lunged forward, and even did what no four legged bull ever could do, when he bent suddenly backward and showed much skill in meeting an attack from the rear. Natchez studied his sinis-

ter antics carefully. He asked Old Jack—"Sure he won't use his hands in grabbing me?"

"He's a bull," Old Jack patiently explained. "He will have hoofs. See! He's waiting for 'em to be put on. Razill an' White Hand are doing it. Not the first time, either."



CÆSAR'S huge hands were being tied with bandages so it would be impossible for him to use his fingers. The schooner was practically deserted. Wolf-face found a Spanish shawl, once the pride of some señorita, but now torn and stained with wine. The men were laying wagers, and those favoring Natchez were demanding and securing big odds.

Razill was elected manager of the ceremony, or fight, and his wicked eyes glowed as he encountered the Kentuckian's frowning gaze. It was surprising how small a ring the gathering formed. The black crouched close to the human wall, his rolling eyes estimating the distance he must spring to transfix his man with the parallel blades. With a smirk more deadly than a scowl, Razill handed Natchez his weapon. The Kentuckian held the stub of a blade in his palm and stared at it speculatively. The steel was a scant three inches long. He was thus engaged when Razill, standing in the circle directly behind the black, touched the latter with his toe and cried—

"Begin!"

Like a catapult Cæsar flew across the ring. Natchez leaped lightly and high above and around him. The black pivoted instantly, but the white seemed to possess steel springs for legs, and was safely aside when the knives made the second thrust. Then he remembered the shawl. Holding it by one corner, he snapped it and elicited a howl of rage as the black caught the stinging impact in an eye. He changed his method and leaped erect and rapidly swung his arms before him to keep the cloth from his eyes as he advanced. He endeavored to get fairly abreast of his opponent, but the

latter was ever shifting his position. Once he believed he had him. With a bellow Cæsar ducked his head and butted murderously. The bellow changed to a wild howl as he felt the short blade rip across his side.

Natchez glanced down in disgust at the haft of the knife. The slashing cut had terminated on a metal ornament of the black's leather belt and the blade had snapped off close to the handle.

Razill was quick to witness this loss of the *toreador's* only weapon. He yelled: "His knife's busted! Go after him, big fool!"

With a squeal of elation, Cæsar bored in. Natchez slowed him up and nearly spoiled his hand, with an uppercut to the chin. Then the black was after him, scrambling madly to plunge the long knives through the dodging, leaping, retreating figure.

"He's got him!" hoarsely shouted Razill; and he opened and closed his hands exultingly.

Old Jack believed he had lost his gold cup when he saw the Kentuckian suddenly go down. The black plunged wildly at him and caught a kick which had a hundred and sixty pounds of bone and muscle behind it. The blow landed on the low forehead and so great was its force the black was momentarily stunned. Natchez followed up this, his first advantage, with a terrific downward slash of his hand at the back of the thick neck, and striking with the edge of his palm.

The black Emperor reared and then sagged stupidly forward. This unexpected finale capped what had promised to be a tragic, gruesome climax. The black collapsed, his body swinging as if his waist were a hinge; and he dropped on his head, the blades digging deep into the ground. Roars of laughter greeted the grotesque spectacle. Natchez, who believed it to be his duty to slay the monster, could not proceed under such conditions even had he been adequately armed. He sent a section of the ring sprawling and walked a short distance away. He was followed by Old Jack and

Wolf-face; but he did not believe the episode had made him any friends. He was a stranger, and in lawless places of the times that was equivalent to being an enemy. Old Jack was hilarious because he had won a hundred dollars in hard money. Wolf-face was blasphemous because the black still lived. The latter drew some distance away from the motley assemblage and sat in the sand with head bowed low, and made gibberish vows to his *juju* medicine. For now he feared the Kentuckian.

Natchez also desired to be alone. He had joined a bloody brotherhood for a purpose, but thus far he had failed to advance General Jackson's business. A soft footstep sounded behind him. He leaped to one side, and faced about before his feet touched the ground. The newcomer was a tall man, whose attire, although tarnished and travel stained, was that of a Spanish grandee. The face was broad, handsome, and smilingly reckless. He greeted:

"Sure it was as fine a shindig as man would want to see. I've laughed till I'm fair sick. And who might yez be, decked out like a don?"

"Your name should be McCarty, I'm thinking," rejoined Natchez; and his heart gave a thump. "My name's Rodney. I'm called Natchez."

"I'm *the* McCarty. Ivery one in the Floridas well knows me name," affably answered Isobella's father. "I've heard somewhere of the name of Natchez."

"I was at New Orleans with Jackson, behind the cotton bales. And you were there . . . Here's a message to you from General Jackson, soon on his way down here to end the war."

"Bless the saints! It's mighty proud I be to have General Jackson carry me in his mind. A fine, well set up figure of a man."

Natchez fished the message from an inside pocket and McCarty opened it. His big mouth widened in a pleased grin.

"I love that man! He'll do himself the pleasure of hanging me! And he means ivery word of it! Ah, me lad, there's a

fighting man for yez. It would almost be an honor to be hanged by the like of him."

"Make no mistake, sir," warned Natchez. "That's just what will happen to you. Jackson always does as he promises."

"Do as he promises? Of course he will, the dear heart of oak! But I'm like the tinker's cat that yez had to catch afore yez could stop her from drinking cream."

"When he showed me what was in the letter I asked if it wouldn't be simpler for me to shoot you on sight. He insisted it must be the noose if you didn't mend your ways."



NOW the gray eyes narrowed, although the humorous smile still twisted McCarty's lips. He struck a mock heroic pose and gestured to the high heavens, and cried:

"Stop all that blowin' an' scurryin' away, yez winds of the Gulf! Come down here an' listen to what a gadfly has to say to the McCarty." Then to the confused and irritated Kentuckian he gently said, "Yez was speakin' an' talkin' of killin' an Irishman?"

"I've told you about that," Natchez coldly answered. "I also have a message from your daughter, whom I met in a Red Stick village."

"You're a great traveler, my brothsome lad. Tattooed Serpent was to guard her for me a bit."

"She is not there now. She's been in much peril since then. You ought to be ashamed to leave a young woman alone for so long. Haven't you a father's love for her?"

McCarty stared blankly for a moment, and then was telling some querulous, creaking gulls:

"God knows if he's soft in the head, or just wants to die." Swinging about, his bearing and manner completely changed, he demanded, "Who the devil might you be to prate to me about my daughter?"

"I'm the man who had to safeguard her while her father was away, doing nothing."

"Not that, lad. Not that," earnestly insisted McCarty. "She's been in dan-

ger? An' I thought her to be as safe as if livin' in a Quaker village. Yez think I left her willingly? It hurt worse than a knife through me gullet. I'm tryin' to get money for her, much money, out of this ruck of border fighting."

"She is now a refugee in a Seminole camp up the river. Tall Tiger's camp."

"I'm glad she's with my friends. I want to make her a great lady. The Floridas offer certain opportunities."

"Robbing graves of gold ornaments."

"Curse you! You dare say that to the McCarty?"

"No. I don't say it now. But I believed it when I found Seminole graves up the river had been looted of their poor trinkets—and the track of a Spanish boot."

"I am no ghoul," said McCarty. "Spanish boots be common down here. I've traded guns for gold, just as the Spanish, French an' English have done an' are doin'."

"But why are you here, with this scum?"

McCarty's eyes grew feral under the persistent cross examination. By a mighty effort he controlled his naturally explosive temper. He quietly explained:

"To see they didn't wander upstream an' disturb my friend, Tall Tiger. Now, me young buck, why are you here in this bloody, murtherin' company?"

"To hand you General Jackson's letter—I had been told you would be found here—and to kill black Caesar. So ordered by Jackson, for the murders the beast committed in Tennessee. I had a third errand. It will be finished when I return to Nashville, or meet Jackson on the way to the border."

McCarty swung his gaze about and surveyed the villainous adventurers.

"They mustn't go up the river," he muttered.

"If they start you can go ahead and warn Tall Tiger, and get the señorita away to a place of safety. I'll hold them back on some excuse, or another."

McCarty smiled grimly at this show of confidence. He insisted, however:

"My daughter is in no danger. The chief will keep scouts out to watch for the devils. But why this big talk about holdin' the rascals back?"

"I am to be their leader," quietly replied Natchez.

The Irishman gaped at him in amazement and then grinned derisively.

"The devil you are! When do you begin leadin'?"

"Now!" snapped Natchez.

"I'll be watchin' yez," said McCarty, blandly.

An outcry from the nearest group interrupted their talk. A man ran up and told the Kentuckian—

"You done for Cherokee Doctor!"

"You're crazy. I plan to do for him, but I haven't had time yet."

"If you catch up with him you'll have to hustle to hell in a hurry! He's gone. Dead."

Natchez shoved him aside and walked to the now silent group of men. Cherokee Doctor had entered "the land of ever deepening twilight." But there was no sign of a mortal wound.

"You done for him when you dumped him overboard and made him lose his medicine bag," accused a man.

"He tried to make new medicine, but lost out," added Wolf-face.

"If you can wish death on one human, you can on another. No matter what color his skin may be," glumly added Old Jack.

"Can any of you tell me what killed him?" impatiently demanded Natchez.

Old Jack eyed him sternly and said:

"You tossed him overboard. Sp'iled his medicine. He come ashore and had to make a new medicine, of course. Not havin' any medicine he stepped on a mud-asp: You killed him just as much as you'd done if you'd stuck a knife atween his ribs."

He pointed dramatically at the headless yet still writhing body of what Natchez would have pronounced to be a livid eel.

The McCarthy swaggered up to the group and announced—

"This medicine business has put the fear of the divil into the big black."

Natchez switched his gaze. Cæsar was bowed low over a fire on which he had piled green stuff. He was inhaling the thick smoke in a fashion that would have quickly suffocated an ordinary man. His eyes were rolling in terror. Natchez approached him with no purpose beyond a curiosity to learn how a man could substitute thick smoke for fresh air, and live. On discovering the Kentuckian, Cæsar leaped to his feet and raced across the strand, threw himself into the water and swam rapidly.

Razill stared after him for a bit, and cried:

"The fool—he can't see! He don't know where he's heading. He's making for the outer channel!"

He shouted for the swimmer to turn back. He fired a pistol. White Hand added his warning, sounding the dread alarm:

"Shark! Shark!"

As if his words had conjured up the rapacious fish, a fin cut the water between the black and the schooner.

McCarty roared—

"A hundred American dollars to an English shilling on Señor Shark!" Natchez turned his head away.

"Hell!" exploded Old Jack, his jaw sagging. And Natchez knew the Black Emperor would murder no more.

The outlaw who had brought word of Cherokee Doctor's death fixed his staring gaze on the Kentuckian and whispered to Wolf-face. Old Jack sidled over to the two, and the trio began moving to the boats. Razill and White Hand already were in a boat. With drawn pistols they announced that they would pick their company.

"May the blessed saints keep on being good to us," whispered the Irishman.

"What's it mean?" demanded Natchez, now completely puzzled, as he beheld the rest of the men pile frantically into the two boats and push off.

McCarty answered by knocking his feet from under him and falling beside

him an instant ahead of a ragged volley of pistol shots. The firing disturbed a squadron of savanna cranes into flight, their orderly formation suggesting an often rehearsed military manœuvre.

"It means bloody murder!" grunted McCarty. "They're leavin' us behind, praises be! I've worn my poor mind ragged tryin' to get thim to sail, with me stayin' behind. I knew I had to get thim afloat even if I had to go along. An' there they would go like a three-legged cat being chased by the divil. It's a fine leader yez'll be makin'!"

"But why such behavior?" asked Natchez, as he picked up his rifle. "Why? Why?"

"They be that bad scared of your medicine," explained McCarty with a chuckle. Then, soberly, "But yez sure have a strong medicine, my son. They lost two men already by cuttin' across yer trail—Look out!"

The warning was occasioned by a man suddenly standing in the stern of the rear-most boat, musket in hand.

"It's One-eyed Bart, their best shot," said McCarty. "Probably he's blamin' yez for his lost dogs."

As if unable to move Natchez stared at the man. He saw the oarsmen lift their blades, while the slave hunter got the rhythm of the rising, falling boat. Up came the gun as the boat rose. McCarty yelled a warning and snatched the rifle from Natchez's hand and fired. One-eyed Bart dropped his gun, and started to bow low, as if saluting those ashore, and plunged headlong beneath the waters of the inlet.

Oars were pulled frantically. Pistols and muskets were wildly discharged at the two men on the strand. McCarty seized Natchez's arm and aroused him to the danger of catching a bullet. The two fled to cover.

"Good shooting! Good riddance!" exclaimed Natchez.

"Oh, but they'll be back," assured the Irishman.

"For what?"

"For me, an' my secret," sighed

McCarty. "I must work fast an' get clear of the country."

"What good will it do them to return and follow you upstream? Of course, you'll go to your daughter."

"I'll pay me respects an' take a tongue lashin'. But it's all for her that I'm riskin' auld Jackson's noose an' the revenge an' avarice of the bloody pirates."

"You talk as a blind man walks," complained Natchez. "Your gold is far south of here. That is, if you really know where any is stored."

The mercurial rover chuckled.

"I come down this way to draw thim divils off my trail," he explained. "The gold is east of the Seminole camp up the river. Lake Okeechobee. I was to go as their leader on a raid. I'd planned to sail to the tip of the peninsula an' then steal away from thim an' come back up here."

"And if they guess your trick and turn back?"

"I'll send me daughter to Blate's post, where she'll be safe, an' challenge the scum to find me. Okeechobee is forty miles long an' twenty-five miles wide. Jackson's army couldn't find me in there."

"The Seminoles will go along to help you?"

McCarty's eyes flew widely open.

"Oh, dear, dear me! So much to learn! Tall Tiger is my friend. But he'll kill *any* white man he catches huntin' for gold around that lake. In a way it's a ticklish job. Seems to be sort of a medicine place."

CHAPTER VII

THE OLD PEOPLE'S GOLD

FURTIVE as fugitives, Natchez and McCarty traveled north and then turned to the east. They made no fires to betray their occasional camps. On the third day of their venture McCarty came upon a horse, a runaway from some red camp. The animal was wild, but McCarty managed to get him by the nose, and after a brief struggle succeeded in looping a tough vine around the lower jaw, which did service as a bit. To Nat-

chez the Irishman appeared to possess the power of casting a spell over the brute. Their luck held. The first time the animal was picketed they found a second horse sharing the pasturage. The capture of this animal was easily effected, and with the two mounts better progress was made.

The way now trended south, their objective being the north shore of the lake, and they followed an ancient trail, which was old before Ponce de Leon came to find his "fountain of youth." At night they heard the howling of wolves, but gave them no heed. The brutes had plenty to eat and were not to be dreaded. They saw many brown bears. One of these, Natchez estimated, weighed fully six hundred pounds. Wildcats, foxes, panthers, rabbits and deer also were plentiful. The country was a hunter's paradise. The savannas were covered with luxuriant growths of grass, at times standing as high as the heads of the mounted travelers. One of the most vivid impressions Natchez would always carry with him was the great number and variety of birds. The aquatic species were especially splendid in coloring.

They passed through a pine wood and debouched into an open and hard country which soon gave way for a half mile of wet prairie. The trail next traversed a cypress swamp for a fifth of a mile and terminated on a narrow hummock, which, McCarty said, encircled the greater part of the lake.

If was mid-afternoon when they halted and the Irishman jocosely said:

"We've arrived safely home, my son. Hang up yer hat an' draw yer chair up to the fire."

The hummock, or low ridge, was elevated several feet instead of inches above the surrounding country. Through the growth could be glimpsed the broad expanse of Okeechobee. Natchez asked—

"How many times have you been here before?"

"Twice. Once without carryin' away any profit; once with a small sack filled with gold an' a knowledge of where much more was to be had."

"If we had a raft, something to float on—"

"Sure I have better'n that," interrupted McCarty. "Leave it to the McCarty to be prepared. It's a fine, roomy dugout, that'll draw only an inch or so of water. It's as good as a flatboat. It's within the toss of a stick where we be standin'."

"What if the schooner's back, and the villains are at the Tiger's village?"

"What the devil you want to think such things for? The schooner is farin' south. The rascals would never put out into the Gulf an' turn back so quick."

What Natchez could not understand was the Irishman's delight in the adventure, while knowing his daughter was in reality a hostage for his good behavior. He again expressed fear for her safety, at least for her peace of mind.

"The little lady is used to my ways," was the careless reply. "Whether in auld Mexico, Barataria, or Panama, the McCarty's girl is safe."

McCarty led the way along a narrow trail to a secret covert to exhibit the dugout. Pushing the craft into the water, he clambered in, seized a paddle and gave Natchez a long pole. He announced:

"I'm goin' to show yez somethin', my son, I've shown no man, white, red or black. The Indians know about it, an' call it the drowned town of the Auld People. But if it was the home of the devil I couldn't stay clear of it. It's a medicine place. The red childer keep away, praise the saints, an' will do bad works on any white man who visits it. We'll sail east for half a mile. Yez can use the pole most of the way."

The lake and its frame of vegetation suggested endless isolation, death. But the clamor of the lavishly colored birds painted the heavens with life. As far as Natchez's sharp gaze could penetrate the hummock continued along the margin of the lake like the rim of a filled bowl.

McCarty signaled with his hand for his companion to cease poling and, drawing in his oar, he leaned over the side. His broad face beamed with satisfaction as he stared down into the depths. Natchez

was quick to follow his example, expecting to behold a sunken village. He was puzzled and disappointed. He asked:

"Why is the water so clear here? Why not white sand everywhere else in the lake?"

"It's not white sand, my son. In ancient times it was a village of the Auld People. Somethin' happened to this village. The water came in an' made a lake of this whole region."

"It's mighty interesting if we didn't have other things to think about," said Natchez.

"Yez think I'm a crazy loon. But I'm thinkin' all the time about my little girl. If I peg out, or she decides to marry, she must have a pretty penny to make her independent of my death, an' of her husband . . . I've been down there."

He pointed to the light gray area at the bottom of the lake. Natchez gaped and waited expectantly. McCarty nodded and answered the unspoken question by saying:

"Yes, I found gold. Funny lookin' things, like tiny dolls, but nothing human about 'em. Made of pure gold. What we get, we must get this time. Once we enter Tall Tiger's camp we'll never have a chance. Never could get away, without some of the band taggin' us. There's a coil of stout rope under that heap of bark yez been usin' for a seat. I think I'll go down."

McCarty stripped to the buff while Natchez was discovering the rope and feeding it over the side. On the free end of the rope, he noticed, was a weight and a stout bag fashioned from a double thickness of canvas.

"Wish me luck," said McCarty as he stood in the stern.



HE RAISED his hands above his head and dived. Natchez watched him with breathless interest. He saw him secure a hold with one hand on some projection of an ancient wall and maneuvered rapidly with his free hand. Then with a kick and a tug on the rope he was shooting to the

surface. Exhaling loudly, he clung to the side of the boat, and handed a small object to Natchez. The Kentuckian's eyes widened as he beheld the squat image and knew it was made of the precious metal. In a whisper he remarked—

"Looks like a flying frog." Already the idea of treasure impressed him of the need of great secrecy.

"Yez can talk out loud," puffed the Irishman. "The birds won't tell. They all look like somethin' a child had started to make, but stopped without finishin'. Every one is made of pure gold. The Seminoles swap little squares, like what the Aztecs in auld Mexico an' the Incas in Peru used to cover the wall of their temples. The Auld People passed away long before the Aztecs got to storin' up the yellow stuff for Cortez an' the like. When I was in Peru, an' all the time I was in auld Mexico, I saw no images like these things. These haven't any heads. On my other trip here I got some that was made to represent humans. None had any heads."

He proceeded to haul in the rope. The bag at the end contained six of the tiny images which he had managed to scrape into it. Only one differed from that which McCarty had brought up in his hand. Obviously it was an image of some form of bird life, as shown by the wings marked on the sides; and like the others it had no head.

Natchez was afire with a lust to press the search, but McCarty insisted: "First we must make a camp. The stuff's scattered around down there. It's the roofs of several houses you be seein'. One stands a story higher than t'others; from here the elevation doesn't show. There's a square hole of a widow in the taller house an' I have a notion of enterin'."

"I'll go down next time. We'll take turns," Natchez suggested.

"Yez shall have a third of what we get."

Natchez shook his head.

"It's all for Señorita Isobella," he said. Then he changed the subject abruptly, and reminded, "I must be returning to General Jackson. If you value your neck

you will go with me and explain away that charge of trading guns with the Indians for gold."

"Whist! Hold back! The guns was for thim to use against the slavers, who run thim off to Cuba in Arbuthnot's schooner—just as slavers caught Tuscaroras in the Carolinas an' sold thim."

"A very pious work," dryly commented Natchez. "But when General Jackson says he'll hang a man, he'll hang him."

They returned to their camping place, looked after the horses and bushed out a place for their blankets. With this much accomplished, both surrendered to the irresistible impulse and returned to the treasure ground. This time Natchez went down. The flooring, which had looked so smooth from above, proved to have numerous irregularities. It was the top of a one-story structure. Adjoining it was a two-story house, reminiscent of ancient adobe buildings which far western travelers had described. The material was not the dried mud bricks of the southwest, but seemed to consist of a conglomeration of shells. Fish swam in and out of the window; some came close to the diver before discovering he was alive.

What Natchez observed and learned was a matter of seconds and while he was clawing the rubble at the base of the taller wall into the bag. Just as he was turning to ascend, his lungs seeming about to burst, he fancied he detected motion through the dark opening; rather an opalescence, as if the filtered sunlight had touched something iridescent. He exhaled some of the pent up air, and with a yank on the rope and thrust of a heel he shot to the surface. A strange numbness seized upon him for a moment as he fumbled at the side of the boat. McCarty was quick to grab at his wrists, but the spell passed instantly, and he pulled himself over the side.

"I'm all right. I need no help."

"Then why the divil do yez scare a body by lookin' like a ghost?"

"McCarty, I'd swear I saw something move in that window."

"A fool fish lookin' around."

"Of course. Just the idea of motion without any idea of what made it. But I'll take a knife when I go down the next time."

"There's naught to hurt a body," insisted the Irishman, as he eagerly hauled in the rope.

The bag contained several small stones, originally forming a part of the original wall, and were held together by a cement that appeared to have been made from fish scales. There were three headless images—headless and with wings etched on the sides.

"Sure, you're a fine worker, friend Natchez!" praised McCarty. "They'll weigh six or eight ounces, altogether. Now I'll be makin' a try."



EACH dived four times, and with every essay Natchez happened to equal his companion in the number of tiny images secured.

"I'd beat yez, if I was younger," complacently said McCarty. "I look down an' see yez scratchin' like a wild hen try-to scratch herself out of purgatory."

Natchez said:

"Tell me this. Do you feel queer—feel like you were being watched, when you are close to that dark hole of a window?"

"Never a queer feelin' except I want to come up for air."

"I'm something of a fool, but I'll be honest. Each time I feel that there is something very bad inside that second-story room. Twice I fancied I saw something moving. Something dark."

"But it's as dark as the inside of a whale," argued McCarty. "How could yez see black movin' against black?"

"I only know I never had that feeling before. And I've been in many tight places."

"You saw nothin'," insisted McCarty. "The work is new to yez. Yez imagine things. We'll rest. Plenty of time."

"No! Time is precious," insisted Natchez. "I'd never bother with this stuff for a minute if it wasn't for waiting

to make sure your daughter gets out of this province."

"She's safe. Rather dull for her, no doubt; but it does women good to be tested by patience. We must hide this gold as fast as we find it. Another thing. While you're restin' a bit I'm goin' to make a sort of a uniform for us to wear. I used one when I was here before. If a Seminole hunter sees us in our new rigs he'll think we are divils an' will run home."

Natchez felt unusually sleepy and succumbed to the spell while McCarty was ranging about the camp. When he opened his eyes he gave a low cry and grabbed for his pistol.

"Don't shoot!" cried his companion's voice.

Natchez's bronzed face broadened in a slow grin.

"You look like the devil," he said. "It must be uncomfortable."

"Not so much as to find yourself bein' put to the torture," replied McCarty.

He had contrived a disguise of dried grass and moss which covered him completely and caused him to resemble some new species of life. He lifted off the bag shaped headpiece that reached to the shoulders, where it was met by a crude cloak fashioned from the same material. He pointed to a similar disguise hanging from the branch of a cypress and indicated it was for Natchez.

"Injuns would say we were two tree devils," said the Kentuckian.

McCarty nodded, and stared soberly out over the wide expanse of the shallow lake. This quick transition from mirth to dour sobriety caught Natchez's attention.

"Why are you so glum?"

"I've made a big decision. Very important." Natchez waited. After a slight pause the Irishman continued, "I've decided to go where I believe the gold is to be found in larger quantity. I'll make a try for the big prize. I didn't plan to spill the truth. It's like this, as I see it. The Auld People tried to run when somethin' suddenly happened at

this spot that caused their village to sink some twenty feet. They must have popped out of windows an' doors. They snatched up a few of their little gods, or idols. They left the big gods behind them."

Natchez frowned. He was worried.

"You can't mean—" he began.

The Irishman finished it for him.

"Do I mean the inside of that pile of white rock? Right, my son. I can slip through that hole in a second, an' maybe scrape up half a bushel of that stuff."

"For all the gold in the world I wouldn't swim through that black hole," earnestly declared Natchez.

"Light will come in through the hole. I won't get confused. There's no danger," answered McCarty.

Natchez was worried and angry to find himself harboring the strange obsession that some unthinkable evil was inside the ancient house. Reason told him it could not be so. Yet he could not oust from his mind the nameless horror he felt of something lying in wait close by the dark opening. On the white flat roof he had not felt this great and persistent fear, although he was far from comfortable in his mind while scraping his fingers close to the wall.

"There's nothin' in there beyond what our minds have put in there," insisted McCarty. "Now let's slip on our rigs an' take a look at the horses."

Natchez rose, put on the cloak of moss and grass and pulled the uncomfortable head covering snugly in place. He followed his companion through the hummock to the edge of the cypress swamp on the north.

They were walking side by side, each thinking of the submerged gold; each considering it from the same angle, but with vastly different emotions. McCarty was visioning bushels of gold quickly procured from the dark interior, while Natchez was imagining horrible guardians of the ancient treasure. It naturally resulted that they conversed none as they proceeded to the point where they had left the ancient trail.



SUDDENLY both sighted a man. A Seminole warrior out on a scout, or hunt. The Indian appeared to be riven with fear, or amazement, at the unexpected encounter. His lower jaw sagged, and his mouth remained open as if about to sound a war whoop. In silence he glared at the creatures formed of tree moss and dead grass. McCarty gave voice to a shrill yell and flapped his loose cloak. The scout dropped his bow and arrow and, with a howl of terror, sped over his back track.

After the man had vanished, McCarty secured his weapons, chuckled heartily and said—

"For years his people will be tellin' how the devil came to stop a warrior from goin' to the medicine lake."

"And if he returns with others?"

"No fear, my son. He'll go back to his village an' spend the rest of his days tellin' his story an' makin' medicine. As a hunter, or a scout, he won't be worth a shillin' for many months. Superstitions make more men useless than do all other things. I'd say . . ."

His voice trailed off into silence and he leaped back and glared at a bull snake, as the big reptile crossed the path.

"He can't harm you," Natchez said.

McCarty pulled off his head covering, mopped the sweat from his face and mumbled:

"It was bad luck we saw crossin' our road. If I could have been quicker, an' could have turned the beast back—"

"And superstition makes more men useless—" quoted Natchez.

"It's no superstition to have a snake cross your path," hotly retorted the Irishman. "It's a bad sign. Men can believe in signs same as they do in the devil, an' not be superstitious."

"Of course." And Natchez's voice was grave. "It's a warning for you to keep out of that black hole at the bottom of the lake."

"Now do yez really think that, my son? Well, perhaps. But such a warnin' can't hold good for more than the day on

which it's given. I'll wait till tomorrow before I go through the black winder."

For the rest of the day he remained quiescent, and talked about the outside world and the war. He told many things Natchez had not known before. He seemed to be well posted on the war.

"It's like this, my son," he rambled on. "Jackson is goin' to bust into this Spanish territory. Then, one of two things will happen. We'll have a war with Spain, or we'll buy Florida. Spain won't be foolish enough to fight for this territory, as it's made her nothin' but trouble. Jackson believes two things are true: that the Indians get aid an' encouragement from St. Marks an' Pensacola traders, an' that Great Britain keeps paid agents here to stir up trouble against the United States. He's right in both of these notions. The Seminoles made Pensacola their base when they raided into Alabama an' took eighteen scalps. Spain can't keep her red children in order."

When they returned to the camp for supper, McCarty referred to the snake, and again said that the threatened bad luck could not persist into another day.

"But you'll think better of risking your life in that black hole," said Natchez.

"I was aimin' to come at that very thing, my son," genially replied McCarty. "I'm goin' down in there, just to prove to myself I ain't afraid."

"And I'll keep out just to prove I've got some common sense," said Natchez.

McCarty took no offense, and began talking about his daughter. Natchez, before he realized it, was relating all that he and the girl had endured together.

"The reckless, impudent, loyal little devil!" fondly exclaimed the Irishman. "I remember like it was yisterday the first time I saw her mother. I fell in love with her up to my ears. I tried to make her understand my honorable motives. An' she knifed me with a tiny dagger that she whipped out of her hair. Time stopped for me, when she went away—died."

Natchez leaped to his feet and startled

his companion into a similar display of activity.

"What is it?" whispered the Irishman.

"A raven-mocker," murmured Natchez.

"The Cherokees believe in that same sign of bad luck. But it can't be, my son, that you believe in it. You're a white man."

Natchez was ashamed, but he truthfully confessed:

"One of those black birds tumbling down out of the sky gives me the creeps. I saw one up at old Crow Town and a man tried to murder me that very day."

"You laugh at my bull-snake. I laugh at your raven-mocker. Let's sleep, so's to be up with the sun. Just a peep at our treasure, an' then to sleep."

Natchez was not keenly interested in the little horde of images. He stared through the branches at the blue sky in search of the witch who put on raven feathers at times.

"Curses on yer raven! An' curses on my bull-snake!" roared McCarty.

Natchez leaped to his feet and demanded—

"What's happened?"

"Some thief pouched our gold while we was walkin' through the cypress swamp!"

"The Injun we saw! The one who was scared of us and ran away. He had been here."

McCarty picked up his gun and shook his head.

"An Injun would take what was in sight. That Injun wore moccasins. Our visitor wore white man's boots, with a lucky star of nails in the heel to scare the devil. Look!" He pointed to a well defined track.

"It points to the lake. He has taken our boat."

McCarty started on the run to prove, or disprove, this disagreeable prophecy. Their boat was as they left it, but at the margin of the lake where signs which showed a dugout recently had nosed into the bank. Natchez hurriedly insisted:

"He came from the west end of the lake. He must have seen our smoke. He landed and found the camp deserted. He

found the cache while approaching from the water. He was in such haste to get clear he never stopped to look about. Hop in! We must make after him, to the west."

They returned by moonlight, unsuccessful, and moodily retired to snatch what sleep they might. Not only was their gold gone, but white men knew their secret. Whatever they were to salvage from the buried houses of the Old People must be accomplished quickly.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GUARDIAN OF THE GOLD

NATCHEZ watched his companion busily preparing the breakfast and whistling a "lonesome" tune as he worked. McCarty ceased his melancholy music and essayed to be boisterous. He laughed loudly for no apparent reason. He sang an old Irish song, so thick with brogue as to be beyond Natchez's understanding. He shifted to a rousing drinking song, once very popular in the Baratarian settlement, and broke off to narrate a dramatic episode of old Panama. Desisting from all counterfeit exuberance he gravely insisted:

"I'm badly misunderstood by various people, my son. Auld Jackson has the notion I'm stirrin' up trouble down here. He's wrong. I'm after gold for my daughter. I get it honorably. The Seminoles trust me. True, they'd be murdering me for fishin' gold out of this lake, along of them thinkin' it's a medicine place. If I come to the end of my trail before I reach my daughter I want you to give all I possess to her an' take her back to the States. She'd be happier livin' in a Gulf town to livin' in the cold North."

"Nothing evil will happen to you, but I readily promise," said Natchez.

"Then away with all mournful talk an' death bed speeches! We'll eat these tasty fish, an' then take to the boat an' try our luck with the demons under the sea."

Natchez winced and said:

"Wish you wouldn't talk like that. You should take your luck for granted. You talk as if you were asking for something to happen."

"If I had a pinch of salt I'd toss it over my shoulder to offset your last words."

The two fell to eating. With the fish devoured McCarty washed his hands and wiped them on dry grass, and philosophically remarked:

"Well, the McCarty goes down to visit the Auld People. If he forgets to come back, be good to the child. Thank God, you're a man of honor!"

Natchez knew it was useless to remonstrate further. As a physical feat there was nothing in the venture to daunt a good swimmer. Yet the spell of his environment persisted, and he was disturbed. They entered the boat and talked but little.

McCarty lost not a moment in stripping and dropping the rope and weighted bag overboard. Natchez noticed he was sending down his long knife in the bag, but he made no comment. He, too, quickly doffed his clothing, which act must have informed the Irishman of his readiness to join him, did danger threaten.

McCarty turned his head and twisted his mouth into a grin, nodded curtly, and dived like an otter for the ominous opening. With a thrust of his legs he scored cleanly and shot through the aperture. With his knife in hand Natchez began counting aloud, and had reached five when he saw white hands thrusting something through the opening. With great rapidity this action was repeated. Then McCarty appeared, and with a kick and a broad stroke popped to the surface. After hooking his arms over the side of the boat and filling his lungs with fresh air, he opened his hands and dropped several golden objects. Inhaling and exhaling with much gusto the Irishman drew himself inboard, and panted:

"What did I fetch back? It's as dark as the inside of the divil down there." He shook the water from his hair and cleared his eyes.

Natchez picked up one of the images.

They were all alike, and suggested a double headed eagle, or vulture. It was the first images the two had found which possessed heads. There were five of them, and they were heavier than any brought to the surface theretofore.

"A better haul than any we've made outside," said McCarty. "At first I just scraped up what I could find in the darkness an' dumped them through the window."

"I wonder why some have heads and so many are headless," said Natchez.

"It meant somethin' to the Auld People," gravely answered McCarty. "I wonder if the ancient folks didn't have castes. The priests, or medicine men, might be represented by the idols having heads, an' the common folks by those without."

"What was the dark room like?"

"Walk blindfolded into a deep cave an' tell me what it's like. I stepped on what felt to be a skull, or two. If they didn't belong to the Auld People, then some poor people have been in there ahead of me. There's much loose stuff on the floor. If they all be like these queer lookin' hens, then the McCarty's only child can live like a princess."

"Did you sense anything? Didn't you feel different than when on the outside?"

"It's a lonesome, clammy sort of a place," McCarty sheepishly confessed. "I'll be honest with yez, I was in a hurry to leave. Next time I'll stay longer."

Natchez feared he was holding something back. He insisted—

"Can't you describe your feelings better than that?"

"I felt like I wasn't alone in there. A sorry confession! Do yez believe a hant ever stays under water?"

"I don't believe in ghosts staying anywhere."

"Well, it was like that I was feelin'. That a hant stood grinnin' at me elbow."

"Probably the skulls—"

"Oh, no, no! The McCarty has no fear of poor, dead skulls. It's like bein' in a dark room, an' suddenly knowin' that

some one else, or *something*, is in the room with yez. Nerves, of course."

"I'll go down for a load of what you passed through the opening," said Natchez.

Before McCarty could demur he was under water. The bag was close by the window; and Natchez, anchoring himself with one hand, used the other in pawing the valuable débris into it. He shot to the surface to relieve his bursting lungs. McCarty pulled up the bag and crooned with delight as he handled some ten pounds of gold. Nearly all the pieces were of the same design as those he had brought up in his fists—two headed birds. These were a third larger than the images found outside the dark room. McCarty descended and was content with filling the bag from the accumulation at the base of the wall. Natchez took his turn, and on coming to the surface reported that the loose litter was well cleaned up.

"Yez saw no ghosts, nor banshees?"

Natchez shook his head and dressed. McCarty offered no objections to returning to the camp. After the gold was concealed Natchez said:

"I had a very disagreeable feeling down there. I'll swear there was something, just inside the window, watching me: or, waiting for me to enter. I believe it would have been out and at me had I waited another few seconds."

"Nerves, nerves," murmured McCarty. "It's like tellin' yerself ghost stories just to scare yerself."

"All right, my friend. We'll say I was scared. Why not make a drag or a sweep, and rake it up? We'd get a dozen times more than we do by diving," said Natchez.

"Son, there's mighty little to harvest unless I go through the window again an' toss out another load. What I got in that room, or hole, was close by the openin'. It's black as Satan's cat in there. No knowin' how wide an' long that room is. It may be thick with gold. Yez might stand waist deep among them cute little bird-divils."

The thought made his mouth water.

"There's something in there, just inside

the window," Natchez stubbornly insisted, unconsciously lowering his voice. "I felt it. If we could rip off that roof and let the light filter in suddenly, what horrid things we might see!"

"Leave be," growled McCarty. "Next we'll be seein' the foul fiend in that room, holding Black Mass. It's such foolish fears that keeps the Injuns from gettin' ahead. We two white men, very superior beings, will go back there an' have it out."

Without more words they returned to the boat and spoke none until they were over the sunken house. Then Natchez tore off his clothes, and urged—

"Let me go down first."

But McCarty already was undressed. Preceded by the bag and knife he made the plunge. Natchez held his breath and leaned over the side of the craft and beheld his companion straighten out on a horizontal plane, and glide through the opening. There followed the usual procedure. Double handfuls of gold were rapidly thrust through the opening. This time the Irishman was working with frenzied rapidity. It was as if he had decided to make no more such visits.

Then his arms appeared in the opening, but the hands appeared to be empty and gesticulating. Then his hands and arms vanished.

TO BE CONCLUDED

Games of Mischance

By JOHN L. CONSIDINE

WHILE man admits he is a gambling animal, he also realizes that he is a sucker and that the term, "a game of chance," is more often than not a misnomer. He will gamble for diversion, but when he is in quest of a fortune he seeks to be protected from his own gambling instincts. Thus one of the inducements offered to recruits for the momentous expedition of Magellan was that there should be no gambling during the voyage. This referred to card games, for the expedition itself was one of the biggest gambles in history—great in its profit to humanity, tragic in its results for the adventurers themselves.

Still, the absence of cards and dice was never a bar to gambling. Cattlemen, holed up on the range from such comforts as bathing, have been known to while away the tedium with cootie contests. A soup plate served for an arena and the pugnacious parasites would battle to the

death on its smooth white floor. Each tiny battler was recruited from the person of his backer, who wagered all the more heavily perhaps because the entrant was a home raised product.

Another Western game requiring no more paraphernalia than a couple of cubes of sugar and fairly fine weather was known as "fly loo." The gamesters, each with a cube of sugar before him, would sit around a table and the one whose cube proved the least popular with the flies would collect the stakes. Under another name it was probably played with dates instead of sugar in ancient Judea, when Methuselah wore diapers, but as fly loo its first appearance in this country was either in Texas or New Mexico.

If ever there was a game of chance, fly loo would appear to be that game, but an Eastern slicker demonstrated the reverse to the dissatisfaction of a Western gambler who had clung to the delusion that

at least one game was on the square.

This New Yorker, Cy Abbott, entered a Denver bar one morning and found Bart Austin yawning over a game of solitaire. After the usual treat at the bar, Abbott asked Austin if he didn't find solitaire kind of slow.

"Sure I do," agreed Austin with another yawn, "but there's nothing else doing at this time of day."

So Abbott proposed fly loo, the bartender brought them two cubes of sugar and the game was on. The first fly displayed a partiality for Austin's cube, so he forked out a dollar. The next eight did likewise. Not one of them went within a foot of Abbott's sugar.

Reflecting on this seeming phenomenon, Austin suspected that Abbott had doctored his sugar, and he was correspondingly vexed. Then he conceived a bright idea.

"This is too slow," he said. "Let's have ten goes at ten dollars for each go."

Abbott agreed.

"But," proposed Austin, "I want it different this time. The man that gets the flies wins the game."

To his surprise, Abbott made no objection. To Austin's greater surprise, he lost one hundred dollars in five minutes. Every fly lit on Abbott's sugar.

Austin was wild. He knew he had been fleeced but not how it was done. But, gambler-like, he controlled his wrath and sought education.

"Stranger," he said, "I hope you won't think I'm too inquisitive, but I'd sure like to know how you wound me up. If you'll put me wise, I'll give my word not to work the trick in your territory and I'll buy a bottle of wine."

Abbott laughed.

"Well, I don't mind telling you," he explained, "that I put a drop of stuff on my sugar that will make a fly hit for the next county the second he smells it."

"I thought that was it," said Austin, "but how about the last time we played?"

"Well, I figured you were about ripe for a change then, so I switched lumps on you just

before you proposed the ten-dollar bet."

This disposition to bet on animals, reptiles and insects dates from the earliest days of the Far West. Mark Twain's Jumping Frog story was founded on fact. When John W. Mackay, founder of the Postal Telegraph, was taking out the Comstock's biggest bonanza he whiled away some noon hours with grasshopper jumping contests. He and about a dozen others would line up their hoppers, and touch them on the rear end with a feather or a straw, and the man whose hopper jumped the farthest collected a twenty-dollar gold piece from each of the other entrants.

From the first day almost, one mining superintendent won every match. Mackay did not mind the money, but he had acquired the habit of success and on that account it piqued him to be a continual loser. So he observed and investigated, and learned that the winner was dipping his feather tip in a weak solution of cyanide of potassium, a liquid which made the hopper smart enough to wish himself elsewhere immediately.

Mackay knew the assayer from whom the superintendent got his solution and what he himself could do with that assayer. The jumping matches were now unpopular—the superintendent's hoggishness had produced its natural result—so Mackay proposed a final match between himself and the superintendent for a thousand dollars a side.

The match was made, the day arrived, the two men lined up their hoppers and the starter gave the word. The superintendent, having furtively dipped his feather into his vial, touched his hopper, and Mackay did likewise with his. Mackay's soared into the air and made a creditable leap, but the superintendent's merely rolled over in his place and lay still. So Mackay won.

He had induced the assayer to substitute undiluted cyanide of potassium, something strong enough to finish any grasshopper that ever hopped. The superintendent's hopper had the bad luck to be dead.

DEAD UNDER THE EQUATOR

By

WILL LEVINGTON
COMFORT



A Story of the Gorilla Country



THERE was a man in Washington with a gorilla story, and a movie studio in Culver City with a synopsis of it, and there was the Cruson party afield for realism, having followed the dank decayed valley of the Congo for weeks. . . .

Four white men in the field party. One of them named Bekin, a writing chap, was already convinced that they did well to

call it Darkest Africa. His most imposing thought as they traveled was that every day's journey in meant one more day's journey to get out.

And gorillas—they had to get the gorillas first. So far, the one best bet was that they had secured Brandeis, the big ape man, to take them in. When you thought of gorillas, you thought of Brandeis, just as you thought of Lonsdale for lions or

McCracken for elephants. Before Brandeis finally consented, it had seemed that everything would be as good as done, if he said yes, but his manner was a sort of "You never can tell, sonny."

Cruson, in charge of the party, wouldn't hear of doubt. He made no secret of the fact that he expected Brandeis to deliver the apes as soon as they reached the slopes of Nebu.

Cruson himself was famous for getting what he went out after. If you didn't know about it, he would tell you. Cruson could vanish into New York or Los Angeles and fish out the right tapestry, the right research sharp, the right sloop, cannon, stunt man or whatever. So they sent him out to get the gorillas. Up to now he had done all a mortal could in linking up with Brandeis.

The so far unmentioned member of the four was Wentworth, the cameraman, said to have had experience in wild animal photography.

The heat was awful. Bekin despaired ever of writing it down, even of telling about it when he got back. It drained him out cell by cell, thought by thought, left him fighting a blur. Everything would be better when they reached the slopes of Nebu, Brandeis promised.

"Why, there's snow on Nebu's cone most of the year. Dead under the equator, too—"

The idea of snow got into Bekin's head like the dream of a clinking ice pitcher in a fever delirium, but when a full view of the mountain finally broke upon his eyes, the very rimrocks of the peak were sun glazed.

"Dead under the equator is right," he thought.

They halted on a glaring ridge well upslope, the native boys under their packs, alternately picking up one foot and then the other from the hot rocks. This was where the gorillas were supposed to be waiting for camera and stuffing parties from Europe and the States.

They saw elephants the next day; they heard lions retching every night. Chimps and orangs and little monkeys glinted

past, but the "old men" were invisible as the taproots of trees.

"Their habits are shady," Brandeis allowed, "but it's just sticking around that gets the gorillas. Only, as I tell you, it's easier to get a rifle shot at them than a camera. I don't recall seeing many of them exposing themselves to sunbaths."

One afternoon crossing a ridge, Brandeis pointed down into a jungle screen, making a sign of silence. The surface of the jungle was level as a lake, the upper foliage pressed and fondled by the wind in the brilliant light. A school of fish playing under the surface of a pond suggested what Bekin saw where Brandeis pointed. Once it was as if a handful of canes was caught and shaken from below. A deep growl sounded at their side—from Link, an Irish wolfhound Cruson had brought along. The cameraman's hand slipped down and tightened upon the hound's collar.

"That's what we're looking for," Brandeis whispered. "Party of them feeding on the young cane shoots."

"They might as well carry parasols for all the good they do me," Wentworth mourned.

"Can't we drive them up here in the light for the camera?" Cruson said impatiently.

"You call to them. Tell 'em what you want," Brandeis suggested.

They made camp high up in the big timber where breeze and a stream made life bearable externally. Weeks passed without a camera shot, Cruson getting meaner and meaner, every nerve of the others worn ragged. Cruson explained that he was used to bringing in quick returns. He cited instances in which he had brought in what he went after—days, weeks before the studios expected.

"The trouble is the gorillas don't know it," Brandeis said thoughtfully.

Yet spoor was plentiful. They were in the habitat of at least one gorilla group. More than once the apes were known to have crossed the ridge, from which the movement was first seen down among the canes.

"It isn't that they're so wild," Brandeis observed. "It's just their perverse way of being when and where we're not."

One afternoon Bekin started for camp ahead of the rest, but rejoined the party again on its way in instead of staying there. The fever flush was gone from his face. Gray sags showed in cheeks and temples. He tried to talk offhand:

"Yes, I saw one—just coming out of Cruson's tent. He had the tent pole in his hand and was taller than that. Big around as a stump. There was a white patch on his back and one of his eyes was just a sunken squint—"

Then as if it was very important he added—

"Coming up to camp, I noticed one of the tents sagging as if a pole had slipped—"

"A solitary," Brandeis said that night. "Old daddy walking off by himself. Past his prime. The white patch on his back tells that—the old man's cape . . . Thought that tent pole was a pretty stick. We ought to have had it painted for him."

Cruson broke in.

"You took us out on a cross-country while our game calls at camp!"

"Yes, it's like that," Brandeis mused. "I went out hunting quail as a kid. Gone all day. Came back, empty bag. My mother said a whole flock crossed the back yard under the grape arbor."

"I want action from now on and I've got to have it," said Cruson.

"I know you have," said the old man amiably, but left the evening fire.



CRUSON also went to his quarters.

"Great how the old man takes him," Bekin said. "A polar bear and a grass python would sit down together, if Brandeis came along."

"A city man like Cruson is all in the day's work to Brandeis," Wentworth remarked. "He's *shem-shem*."

"How?"

"Initiate—inured to the jungle." The cameraman's hand slipped down to

Link's shaggy head. Cruson's hound adored him, and tried not to show it when his own boss was about.

Cruson came to the tent flap and called the dog. Down the slope the native camp went suddenly silent at the sound of the voice of the boss.

Bekin's fever still smoldered. That long walk in the swamps of the Congo bed had inserted its virus into his veins. Even the cool winds of night only fanned the skin of his face. Heat raged underneath. He felt a sick man's irritation toward Cruson and an active hatred toward Africa herself, every stone and shrub of her and the stinking swamps below—swamps that had to be crossed to get out. Sometimes he lost hope entirely of ever making it back to the coast where boats waited.

Finally Brandeis warned him to lie low in the heat of the day.

"You can join us later in the afternoon, if you feel like it," he added.

The wolf-hound Link was also chained in camp, his sole idea concerning gorillas being to drive them to uttermost parts. One afternoon in lengthening shadows Bekin started up the mountain in a direction where he had heard voices awhile before. Everything now was startlingly still. After a half hour's climb he sat down to rest, and the second big show of his life began. A male gorilla was moving out from a narrow aisle of trees within rifle shot above, not the old one he had seen before, but a black pillar of a beast, this one, slimmer, more upstanding.

And not alone. His whole establishment on an outing apparently; three low dames slightly bent, slim flanked, more simian, business of carrying their own one way or another; and behind the three, a gray granny, empty armed, scant breasted, a spook of venomous suggestion.

The apes weren't looking his way, but were intent on something behind. They were drawing off silently from a disturbing presence higher up. Presently Bekin saw the reason. Wentworth was following

with his tripod, camera screwed on, evidently intent on driving them anywhere out of the shade, which was too dense for pictures under the big trees.

At this point the male took it into his head not to be driven farther. Leaving the others, he started back toward the cameraman, occasionally giving himself a sweeping push with his hand on the ground. Once he straightened up to make fierce hurried gestures to the waiting dames, then resumed his scooter stride toward Wentworth, who meanwhile had set up the tripod.

Any move of Bekin's would have stampeded the females. Besides, Wentworth, now winding in the approaching male, was doubtless backed up by Brandeis and Cruson. Within ten feet of the lens, the gorilla straightened, flung his arms over his head as if waving a blanket, then doubled forward to finish off the absurd intruder. A thrill of approval went through Bekin at the way Wentworth held his ground, winding the big ape's movements into his camera even after a shot brought him to a stop with a huddled lurch. Meanwhile, nearer Bekin, what had been a grim tableau of watching females changed to a vanishing act at the sound of that shot.

The male was in no such hurry. He backed off from the camera, which Wentworth started working again, then circled toward a thicket at right angles, halting close to the leaves and peering in. With both hands he pushed back the branches, and Bekin saw a human figure there—Cruson—arms down, transfixed. As the ape reached in, another shot sounded from Brandeis, and with its echo an utterly foreign voice sounded through the African grove—

"Why pick on me?"

Bekin came to from his trance and also fired. Cruson had slumped to the ground, his knees crumpling like an effigy. The ape pawed the figure, partly lifted it, let it drop, then bent over it a second or two as if untying a bundle. Finally he straightened up and made off, none of the shots having a noticeable effect.



CRUSON made no sound as they carried him to his quarters. No mark on him yet, no bones broken. His eyes were partly open, glazed, all canniness gone out of them.

"We'll know better tomorrow," said Brandeis by the fire that night. "Likely to be torn inside. Whatever physical damage isn't likely to compare to what happened to his mind. Cruson didn't belong here. I knew it, but not quite well enough back at the coast."

Wentworth shivered and started down toward the lights of the native camp.

"Did anybody else hear him yell, 'Why pick on me?'" he asked queerly.

"Something like that," the older man said. "We're going to forget about it anyway."

"But he was armed," the cameraman persisted.

"I know, but funk sometimes takes 'em that way. My theory is that all the time Cruson's been urging us at them, he's only had the vaguest sort of idea what gorillas are made of. In the bushes today was the first minute he really understood where he was and what he was out after—that money couldn't help him, that you come to the Congo on location on the Congo's terms."

"That big boy must have walked off with five or six shots in him," said Bekin. "Bending over the boss that way, he looked as if he was unloosing a blanket roll."

"Hey, cut that!" from Wentworth. "I'm trying to get it out of my head before fixin' for sleep."

"Any of your pictures come out?" Brandeis asked.

"No, just a stir of shadows. I knew at the time it was too dark, but couldn't resist going through the motions."

Cruson's body blackened. He couldn't stand; mysterious organic bruises held him down, but as Brandeis had intimated, the effects of nerve shock were more serious. He had only one sentence, "Take me out of here!" spoken with something more sinister than physical fear showing in his eyes.

With Cruson down, Bekin picked up. Fever went out of him and the general frightfulness, including the hate he had felt for the boss. That last slipped from him like a smothering robe. He entered into the job with the others, trying to make up for lost time. Wentworth commanded his respect. "Couldn't resist going through the motions," had established that, and for Brandeis he was learning something as fine, finer if anything. The idea of all three was to make good on the expedition, but they had Cruson to contend with from an entirely different angle. He wanted to leave. He asked only to leave. His tones were forceless, but persistent.

"Why, we're getting warmer every day, Cruson," Brandeis soothed. "Suppose you found yourself back on the steamer with no pictures. Men like us get what we go out after."

"I don't care. Take me out! Please take me out—"

They called it delirium and kept on, never leaving him alone, however. The upper slopes of Nebu became familiar as a framed panorama—rock, ravine, and the great lake of canes farther down the slope. The apes still crossed the open ridge. Finally Wentworth began to rig a shelter of bark and branches there, thatched with palm leaves. His eyes were desperate, his face pinched and forlorn.

"We've tried everything. We've tried going to them all over the mountain. Now they've got to come to us. More than that, it's got to be daytime. Right out in the sun—"

"That's the spirit, Wentworth," said Brandeis. "If you just stay still enough, long enough—"

"Damn their creepin' habits. They cross the ridge every second or third night," the cameraman later reported. "Right in front of my door."

Brandeis came in at sundown one evening after a long ramble alone.

"There's been a change in leadership. If I'm not mistaken, that old one has taken back his harem. I found spoor

today—same females, but the old man Bekin saw plainly marked among them. The big male that mauled Cruson probably went off and died somewhere."



THEIR habits were quite undeterminable. They were detected in the bamboo during several days, and tracks of them were found up under the big trees near camp other mornings. Then it was the other way round; spending their days in the remoter heights and their nights below feeding. One morning Wentworth returned to the ridge to find his shelter demolished, blocks of stone overturned, roof pulled off.

"It's just their way of getting acquainted," Brandeis said. "They're becoming used to you. They'll come up some afternoon and make a call, if you stay long enough."

That's how it turned out. Moreover, Bekin was luckily on hand at the time for the second camera. Wentworth's reprisal for the overturned shelter was not only to restore that, but to build another a few paces farther down toward the valley of canes, a camera installed in each. Both men were under cover in the lower one when their break came.

It looked at first like a black door opening into the green foliage below, the mighty beast slowly turning himself round and round, as if it were part of the process of extrication from the jungle. Then they saw the white "cape".

"It's your old one, Bekin!" Wentworth whispered. "Coming up, too. Harem with him, sure as daylight. This is the big picture! You creep up to the other shelter and take in the ensemble. I'll do the closeups. Don't start shooting. I'll be all right. I'll let you know, if I need help."

Bekin followed orders. When he turned the big male and his following were on the way upslope, the ancient gray female among them, identifying the household as the same that had followed the younger male.

The "old man's" familiarity with the

ridge was obvious, except for the new shelter. He paused to study that, then continued his climb, yammering at the others, who stayed back.

The patch of white on his back showed as he flung about—incredible vastness of bulk—his head waved lightly in listening, as if on a swivel of superfine workmanship. Not remotely gun shy, but puzzled somewhat as to what first to destroy; all of which, including his hissing leer of rage, the camera was taking in for the world to view at its leisure later on.

Farther up, Bekin's lens included not only the ape, but the lower shelter, and now into focus crept the females with the old gray one ahead. She was clucking, sucking at her lips, and expelling her breath at him in ghastly revelation of the dark arts of the pit.

Bekin wound her in—naked sloping shoulders accentuated in the light—until the old one's thick black arm reached to the roof of the camouflage, stripping off the thatch with one masterful yank.

"Keep winding the camera—don't kill him!" Wentworth called, backing out of the ruins with his machine. "Don't mind me. Get those wenches into the picture too!"

The big male paused a second or two to finish leveling the shelter. Wentworth picked up his camera. The old man wanted him, was after him with his overhead swimming strokes, his chest close to the prongs of the tripod.

This registered in Bekin's film, also the side maneuver of the old gray. She had circled and closed in; in fact, she was reaching gingerly for the cameraman as if expecting him hot to the touch, when Bekin caught up his rifle and fired. She didn't fall, but vanished screaming, clapping her hip with one hand, the other raised high. The remaining females scattered like fragments of an explosion, but at the sound of the shot the old one struck back the prongs of the tripod and leaped at the man behind. Wentworth was carried over backward, camera still in his arms.

"Now get him!" he yelled from the

ground, but abrupt finishes were not to be counted on.

With Bekin's rifle emptying into him, the "old man" pushed himself up with one paw, holding on to Wentworth with the other. That was the instant when a baying roar sounded from the slope toward camp—the wolf hound, Link, on the way up, dragging his chain, dreary weeks of forced confinement lost in the zeal of his coming. Evidently he took in the whole affair in his last few jumps on the upcurve of the slope, for there wasn't a falter before his last leap at the throat of the upstanding ape.

It was done with the ease of a magician completing his favorite trick of the evening. The hound was caught in the air and broken and stretched like a chunk of dough in the two simian hands.

Then, Bekin's last shot began to take effect. With a groan of surprise the gorilla let himself down, one of his thumping fists still holding to the dog. With the butt of his gun, Bekin effected release. Link struggled to get up, wheeling his head about, sneezing the blood from his nose.

Wentworth, now sitting up, pushed the camera aside and shoved himself over to where the hound lay.

"Good old Link. Got here, didn't you? He dropped me—to take you—" he sagged back into Bekin's arms.

Brandeis appeared, looked them over one by one—ape, hound, shelter, camera, and the two men.

"Pretty busy for a minute or two, eh?"

"He didn't mash the box; just the tripod," Wentworth muttered sleepily. "Oh, I say, Bekin, how much did you get with your camera?"

"The whole works up to the time when the old gray reached for your neck."

Wentworth had a broken thigh bone and a mashed shoulder, but his nerves were too good for him to take a serious beating from shock.

"Me, I'll be taking my ease on a litter looking up at the leaves with you fellows trudgin' out the valley."

There was a deeper hush than usual about that nightfall.

"And old Link stays behind," the cameraman said. "I was getting to like that roughneck."

"For a long time I didn't favor his being here," said Brandeis, "but from all I can hear, the best thing ever happened to this little party was that Link didn't sit down to think it over at the ridge."

By the time they reached the coast, Wentworth was on crutches. Cruson, too, was getting to be himself again at the

the sight of a civilized background.

"Yes, we got the pictures," he explained to bystanders as they stepped aboard ship. "Wentworth, my cameraman, and I got mauled up by the gorillas, but we got what we went after—"

Bekin strode out of range of that voice and waved a last time overside. The old guide standing there at the stern of the lighter waved back. Brandeis was already billeted for another trip up the river.

America's First Hunter

By M. R. HARRINGTON

A FEW YEARS ago a cowpuncher, riding down an arroyo near Folsom, New Mexico, saw some bones sticking out of a cut bank. They looked familiar, something like cow bones, but they were buried a good way down from the surface; and so he reckoned they might be pretty old and figured he had better report them.

As a result an expedition from the Denver Museum and the American Museum of New York dug up these bones and found that they represented a small herd of buffalo, of a species thought to have been extinct for twenty or thirty thousand years, a sort known to have been buddies of the mammoth and the saber-tooth tiger.

Consequently the scientists were startled when they began to find well made flint points—probably for darts or javelins—among the deeply buried bones. The little herd had been slaughtered by man! Later it was discovered that most of the tails of the skeletons were missing. The buffaloes had all been skinned!

This upset a lot of scientific theories; for most archeologists had previously believed that the American Indian was a recent comer from Asia—had only been in America a few thousand years.

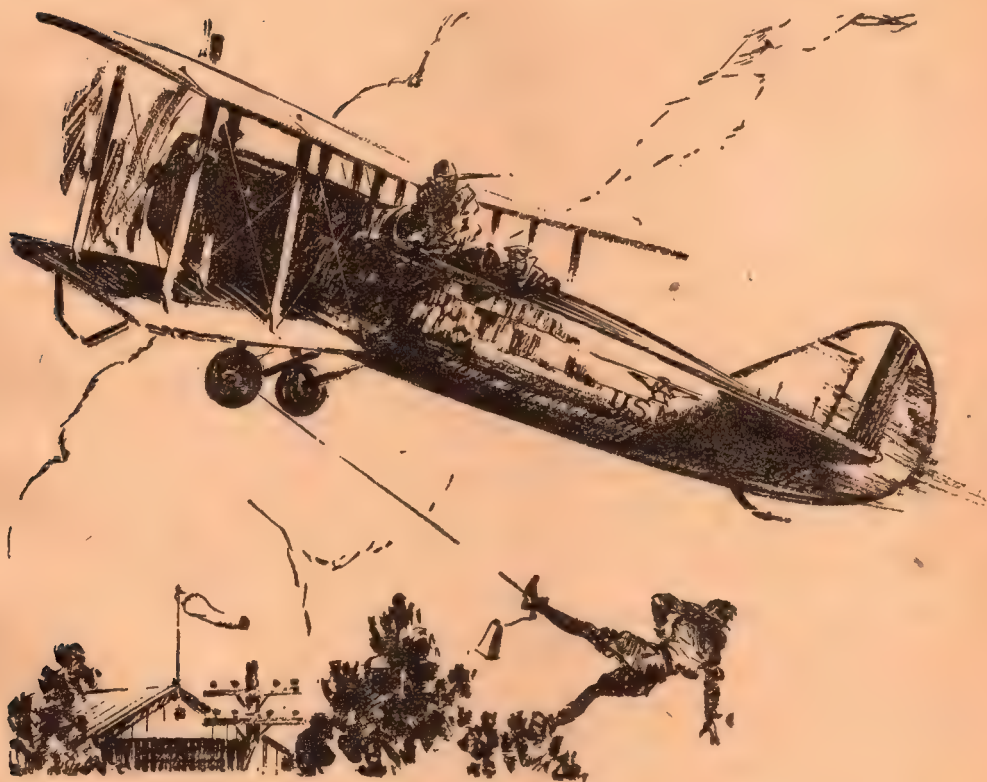
Today more evidence to show that

ancestors of the Indian discovered America before the queer creatures of the past had disappeared is being uncovered in Nevada. An expedition from the Southwest Museum of Los Angeles, backed by the Carnegie Institution of Washington and the California Institute of Technology, has been digging in the floor of a cavern known as Gypsum Cave near Las Vegas. Here they have uncovered bones, huge claws, dung and even the long coarse hair of the quaint old ground sloth *Nototherium*, which must have weighed about half a ton, along with the bones of no less than three kinds of American camels and two varieties of native American horses. And with these bones are being found flint dart points; broken, painted wooden dart shafts; a flint knife; pieces of torches; and ashes of camp-fires.

The first American hunter, it now appears, had a great variety of game to choose from. Besides the different kinds of bison he had a great assortment of camels, horses and ground sloths in addition to many kinds of animals still surviving; this much we know. Probably also he tracked the great elephants we call mammoth and mastodon, and battled with the powerful shortfaced bear, the giant lion and the dire wolf.

FOR THE GOOD *of the* SERVICE

By ANDREW A. CAFFREY



WHILE a Yank pilot was overseas he had little to fear from the flight surgeon's 609 examination, which is the Medical Corps' designation for its physical flying exam. But after the war the 609 caught up with your hard flying gang. For a fact, it came right along and laid them by the heel as soon as they had returned to the swell old U. S. A. All pilots had to stand that exam; and the thing sure took some of the boys down the line. Set 'em down

for their last landing, which wasn't so awfully tough when you consider that most of the wartime help was ready and willing to return to civilian ranks. But, on the other hand, some of those returning overseas pilots hadn't had enough of air. And Air Service was the only place to get more of it.

Lieutenant Cab Cable was one of these. Cab came back to the States late in '19 and reported for further flying duty at Mitchel Field, Long Island, New York.

For two full hours of that first morning on Mitchel Field, Cab flew the hangar macs on short hops around the field. Again, after noon mess, he carried more macs. And when he quit for the day, he quit only because his old Hisso motor had developed a cluster of heavy breathing, badly blowing exhaust valves. The Hisso had no power left. But, within those flying hours, the new ex-overseas lieut had carried more poor greaseballs than had been off the ground in many moons. Mechanics like to ride, and the pilot who gives them a chance is a swell guy. A made man. You'd be surprised to know how big Lieutenant Cable loomed when that day had ended.

When Cab strolled out to the deadline next morning there was another Jenny all set to go. This ship was actually shining. Even the brass turnbuckles and radiator shell had been rubbed to a high yaller gloss. Why, soldier, the old hack was beautiful to see.

"What's more," the sergeant in charge went on to explain to the awe struck pilot, "there's gas in the tank, oil in the sump and reservoir, and clean, fresh water in the radiator. What I mean, these hangar hellers'll take care of you, Lieutenant. You've done right by 'em, and they'll take care that your equipment is jake."

"Like to ride, do they?" Cab mused as he again began to strap on his helmet and goggles.

"Like to ride!" the sergeant repeated. "Say, Lieutenant, I have boys on this crew that'd give a right arm for a hop. You won't believe it, but there're macs here who have been with Air Service for two years, with never a chance to get off the ground. They want to fly too. They've always had a yen for the stuff. But all they've ever piloted is the good old Air Service insignia—the pick and shovel."

While the sergeant was laying open a cross-section of "what's wrong with American air" Lieutenant Cable was taking a peek at these enlisted stiffs who craved cloud blown space. This ship,

on this fine morning, seemed to be under the care of just about every mac that Mitchel boasted. And, like the greatly favored ship, the macs too were all set to rise and fly. Cab wondered where they could lay their hands on so many helmets and goggles. The overseas man smiled, for he surely seemed to have a day's work ahead. It was expected, so he'd produce.

As he climbed aboard Cab said to the sergeant:

"I'll hop as many as I can. I'll set down out at mid-field. You send 'em out, and I'll take 'em up. That will speed up operations, Sergeant."

"That will be jake," the noncom agreed. "While this lasts this gang will work like hell. But it won't last, Lieutenant."

"Won't last, why not?" the new pilot asked. "I'm willing."

"Yeh, I can see that, Lieutenant. But as soon as headquarters gets hep to this, you and me'll learn that these greaseballs are not on flying status. See? In other words, these macs are just outa luck."

"That, Sergeant," Cab said to the noncom, "seems to be a sore spot with you, eh?"

"Hell no!" The sergeant laughed. "Not at all. I get out of this man's Army next week. I can forget. Uncle Sam will never again get such good, cheap help. O.K., Lieutenant. I'll have 'em at mid-field."

Cab then put in a busy hour and a half of air work. After that he taxied back to the deadline for more fuel. And while the eager, oversized crew was servicing the ship a new element entered the day's doings. This new, butt-in element arrived in the gangling form of a fourteen year old boy. He barked—

"How about a ride, Lieutenant, eh?"

Lieutenant Cable stopped talking with the sergeant. He sized-up the butt-in kid, then resumed the conversation where it had stopped.

"Hey, you," the gangling one persisted, "how about a ride, eh? Come on, give me a hop too. What do you say—next trip, huh?"

"You're too young and beautiful, sonny," Cab kidded. Then he added, "Now roll your hoop like a good boy. Get off the flying field or papa will spank hell outa you—"

"Aw, you go plumb to hell!" the kid wailed. "You big stiff, you!" Lieutenant Cable here looked kind of hard at the loud one, and the loud one backed away to a safer distance, continuing his tirade with:

"I'll get even, wait and see! I'll tell Major Dunn. You'll see if you'll ride any more of these—"

"This ends this," the sergeant told Cab when the soldier-talk youth had ducked behind the nearest hangar.

"To whom does that belong?" Cab asked.

"It's Major Zeno's charming child," said the noncom.

"Zeno? You mean the medical major?" Cab mused.

"Yeh, old 609 himself. That's his brat. The whole family is living on the post," the sergeant made known.

"And you think he'll run to Major Dunn?"

"Damn tootin'," the sergeant stated. "And what's more, old Dunn will give the lousy squirt a lollypop for telling. As for the kid, Lieutenant, he's always trying to mooch hops. Crazy to fly."

"Why doesn't old Zeno poison the brat?"

"Aw, the old gent's all right," the noncom said. "He's a nice old lady. Nothing worries him but his exams. As long as he can put you flying gents over the hurdles, make you hop on one foot, ride the swivel chair and so on, he doesn't care who takes care of the kid. For a fact, I doubt if old Zeno knows that he has this awful squirt running loose here at Mitchel. Maybe he thinks that he left the horrible thing down at San Antonio with the rest of his bad bills. Old Zeno isn't so worse, Lieutenant."

"That reminds me," Cab said. "I've been notified to go up for my 609 exam first thing this afternoon. Maybe the squirt will tell the old gent to flop me for this, do you reckon?"

"Not a chance," the noncom figured. "The pest knows enough to steer clear of the old gent. But unless you're tip-top, Lieutenant, don't report for that 609. Old Zeno thinks he's doing Uncle Sam a big favor whenever he flunks a pilot off the payroll. It's the old Army game, you know. The M. C. never did like you air nuts with your extra flying pay. Don't know's I blame 'em, either."

"Oh, well—" Cab laughed— "I've taken physicals before; and I always pass. I'll cross that bridge when it comes to me. For the time being, Sergeant, I'd best spend a few more hours on the wing. If the squirt ends this it will be a long time before the boys get any more birding, what?"



AFTER noon mess Lieutenant Cable put on a clean suit of undies and went over to the flight surgeon's stronghold. Major Zeno was just as the sergeant had described him. He met Cab beaming. Yes, siree, sir, he'd put the lieutenant right through the 609.

One of the major's M.C. sergeants took Cab in tow for the eye and ear tests. Soon the sergeant reported that the lieutenant's peepers and hearers were jake. Major Zeno was glad to hear that. Fine!

Now, in pompous person, the major stepped down and deigned to put the lieutenant through the rest of the examination. The major, in starting, explained that he didn't, as a rule, handle each case in this very personal way. But he'd heard so much about the lieutenant's war record that the lieutenant's examination was a matter of interest.

To which line of hooley Cab said to himself—

"Bushwah!"

So the major whirled Cab in the revolving chair. When that was over all Cab knew was that he'd had a ride. The old boy made his note but offered no comment. Next, in the nude, or in the alk together as we say in the Quarter, Cab hopped here and there on one foot. Next

he walked a line. Then the major rapped him under each knee. And in turn Major Zeno made more notes, but said even less than on former occasions. Now the major strutted into his orientator room.

Cab had never been in the Ruggles Orientator before. He rather liked the dizzy ride in that crazy, whirling, spinning, looping thing. And when Cab stepped out of the device he expected the old boy to remark, at least, upon the manner in which Cab flew his turns. But there was nothing coming up except a few words on the weather, plus the major's recording notes on his trusty pad.

The rebreather chamber was another new one on this old overseas pilot. He had heard of the thing. Also Cab understood that some airmen feared this airless box. They feared what its rarefied air might prove them to be—or not to be. However, Cab stepped into that chamber of horrors with a song in his wild heart and a whole lot of Yank wonderment in his dome. What had the major to show him that was new? Bring it along! He'd meet everything they tossed in the ring, and he'd meet everything more than halfway. That's the thing of knowing that you're fit: The Medical Corps can't ring in anything on you. And, anyhow, what's a small airless box, plus its many colored lights, to a guy who has scratched the real ceiling and gazed into the flickering lights that flared at the business ends of Spandau guns? Nothing!

As Major Zeno exhausted air from the rebreather chamber and sent Cab to twenty thousand feet, theoretically, the latter knew that he was retaining all his reactions. The major sent Cab higher. Why, Cab could have told the old boy just how high he was, at any given moment, without looking at the dials. Cab knew altitude. What's more, he liked the ceiling; and how few care to go high? High, for the average airman, is seven or eight thousand feet. And you don't catch them much higher. However—to get back to the rebreather test—it ended. There were more notes to be made. Old Zeno even made a few re-

marks about a coming polo game at Meadowbrook, but offered no hint of Cab's standing.

Anyway, all the way through, the 609 examination was a dull, flat failure as a social event. It wasn't as exciting as crossword puzzles. It was like being in some sort of contest where the score would be drawn out of a hat. No fun at all.

But in the end, after moving from room to room, Major Zeno turned Cab loose, saying:

"That's the whole of it, Lieutenant. If you drop in along toward quitting time this evening I'll give you a final decision."

"Thank you, sir," Cab answered, and departed; for he knew that the old boy must have a few mysterious hours alone before he could hand down the answer to anything so important as his beloved 609 exam. At the same time, Cab knew that any Medical Corps sergeant could give the same exam, with the answer, and be right back on his knees by the time the dice got around to him again.

Just before retreat, having returned from a flight down over the Sound, Cab dropped in on Major Zeno.

"Good evening, sir," he greeted. "How did I come out, sir?"

"You didn't, Lieutenant Cable," the major answered in his best professional voice, as though an ice age had returned to that part of North America. Gone was the warmth from the old boy's voice. Right away Cab began to wonder if a prodigal squirt had returned to tell pop.

"You mean, sir, that I am not physically fit?" Cab asked.

"As the average man goes," the major said, "you are very much physically fit, Lieutenant. But average fitness and flying fitness, as we aim at the latter in Air Service today, are two entirely different standards."

The major spread Cab's exam sheet before him on the desk. He drew a professional finger downward, over column after column. He swelled a bit and tapped the top of his desk with his knuckles.

"I'm very sorry, Lieutenant Cable,"

he concluded, still with a chilled voice.

"You mean," Cab asked hesitantly, "I'm through, sir?"

"That's what the examination seems to show, Lieutenant."

"But, sir," Cab advanced, "there must be something wrong. I never have trouble in the air. Why, sir, I—"

"Our examination," the major cut in, "does not make mistakes, Lieutenant."

So that's how she stood. It was tough on the pilot, though. Good Lord, it began to look as though this nice old lady might be crowding Cab out of air. Cab had that all-sunk feeling. He was stopped.

But he had to say something.

"My record, sir. My overseas record shows that I flew nearly a thousand hours on front line patrol without accident. And since the Armistice, here and there, at a dozen different places, I have put in nearly another thousand. There are few men in the Service with as many hours, sir."

"Now, now, Lieutenant!" the major now-nowed, and waved the flat of his big mitt in Cab's face. "I hear this same argument from every man who fails to qualify. Your argument does not hold. After all, it is not what a man was but what we find him to be today. Our medical science, as it deals with the flying man, goes ahead rapidly. The man who flew in the late war isn't the man who fills the bill today. And likewise, the man who passes for status today may not be the physically fit man that we will look for a month from now. You can see the logic of this, Lieutenant, can't you?"

"Yes, sir," Cab agreed.

And how low in spirits this yes-man was! That bridge which he was going to cross, when it came to him, had sure proved to be one too many bridges for the overseas bird. Hell of it was, a fellow had no comeback. They merely said you were the bunk, and b'gosh you were the bunk. The Army gives a man no openers. It's one of the things wherein the Army stands adamant; for the Army admits of no mistakes—on the Army's

part. And when Old Man Army goes thumbs down on a man, that man stays thumbs down; even if the Army is the loser in the long run. She's one great life, soldier.



CAB went out of that office like a man in a dream. But he hesitated in the anteroom, for a minute, and got mad.

Now it's one thing to give a man the bum's rush when that man is good natured about the matter; but when Cab was really mad, he was mad all over. And when he was mad all over nobody could burn his bridges without hearing from him. Nor could they hand him the wrong end of the stick, any stick. So, being hot under the collar, he went back into old Zeno's office.

"Will you give me another minute, sir?" Cab snapped.

"Certainly, Lieutenant Cable," Major Zeno agreed. "What will it be?"

"I have a right to know just where I fell down. Please explain."

The major dug Cab's 609 out of a filing cabinet. Again he spread it out on his desk where the lieutenant, too, might see it. The major then began to fill the small office with big medical words.

"Pardon me, sir," Cab snapped.

The major cut away from his technical big parade and came to rest, with fire in his eyes. The ex-pilot then carried on—

"Those highfalutin medical terms are just so much bulloney to me, sir. I want to know in everyday language just what is wrong with me. That's all I ask, sir."

"Very well," the major snapped back.

The tone of his voice told Cab that the old boy didn't fancy getting down from his high hoss and tramping through the mud with small talk people. Everyday English is language, and no foolin'. But medical terms put a man in a class apart.

"You," the major said, "simply do not react. Your perception, oddly enough, is keen, very keen. Yes, you note each act; but the reciprocal opposition is

slow. Surprisingly slow, Lieutenant. In other words, in a real tight place you can not think. At least you can not do so with the speed demanded by present day Air Service. Am I clear?"

There was something within Cab that yelled for something else. That yelling something was yelling to Cab to start in, right here, and take the whole Medical Corps apart, bone from bone. But all he said, to the major's last question, was—

"Yes, sir, I see."

The major said, "Good evening, Lieutenant," and went out. For a long time, sitting there on the edge of old Zeno's desk, Cab stared at the door through which the major had passed. Cab considered another door, the door that was letting him out of Air Service. It hurt like hell, for he loved Air Service; but it wasn't because of the Service but because of the air. He seemed to be facing a great void—his future.

"In a tight place you can not think," to quote a major.

Mess call was sounding, leaping from roof to roof, across Mitchel Field. Thinking of a day when he had outsmarted no less than two majors at one time, and spent a day in Paris, Cab went toward the post's officers' mess. That mess, of evenings, wasn't ever very well attended. Most of the commissioned men, with jack in their kicks, made it a point to jump down to the Big Town for the evening's evening. So there were only three other flying officers on hand when Cab arrived.

"What," Cab asked them, "does a *bon pilote* do when said *bon pilote* falls down on his 609?"

"He goes flying mail," Lieutenant Ross Kirkpatrick answered. "Why what's wrong, Cab? Did you slip up?"

"The yeas have it," Cab made known. "I did. How about this air mail of which you speak so quickly? Where and what is it? Also, what do they fly on air mail, if anything?"

"While you've been batting around Europe," Kirkpatrick went on to tell, "the Post Office Department has organ-

ized this service. The main hangout is at College Park. The army has turned over a bunch of dangerous Dan D. Hatches for the air mail braves to fly. All the boys who don't like Army and Navy pace are going into it. Lee and Smith—half a dozen of the many Smith boys. Vanetti, Nutter, Rutter, Miller, Bill Morgan and half a hundred more good, bad and worse pilots. All you've to do, Cab, is hop down there, see the President and tell him that I sent you. But, to get back to the 609, who put you through?"

"Old Zeno in person."

"That's bad, very bad," Kirkpatrick growled. "You might just as well kiss us goodby, Cab. If it was any other examiner you might beat the things by asking for another exam in a few weeks. But that old Jinglebells Zeno is the recognized daddy of the awful thing called 609. You can't beat him."

"That's how I figure the thing, Kirk. Guess I've got to take it standing, eh? How soon will they open the door and put the boot to me?"

"It'll take a few weeks before you're pushed into the outgoing side of the revolving door," Kirkpatrick answered. "But they might mark you 'on the ground' right away. Take you off flying. Guess you better grab off as much air work as you can. Had much Dangerous Dan time, Cab?"

"I had a few De Haviland hours back at Romo after the Armistice," Cab said. "Never got to a place where I loved the damned things, Kirk."

"You will," Kirkpatrick promised. "Now, for my own part, I'd sooner fly a Dangerous Dan than any other ship. Anyway, Cab, you'd best cram a few hours behind Liberty motors. They'll put you through some sort of a test at College Park."

"But there'll be no 609, will there?" Cab laughed.

"Hell no!" Kirkpatrick answered. "Air mail can't count that high. It's too young. All that will come later and spoil air mail too."

Early the next morning Mitchel Field

had a heavy rain. When Cab strolled out to the hangars at nine o'clock the sergeant told him:

"All flying is washed out, Lieutenant. Maybe there'll be something doing along toward noon, or after. By the way," the noncom continued, "there's something on the bulletin that I want to show you. Right over here, Lieutenant, on the east wall of the hangar."

There on the east wall bulletin was an official memo, over Major Dunn's name, which advised all and sundry that no enlisted man was to go into the air without an order from flying office.

"The fun lasted quick, Lieutenant," the noncom remarked.

"Yeh, it did, Sergeant," Cab agreed, low and pretty bitter. "It's tough on your macs. But, as far as I'm concerned, it doesn't much matter, Sergeant. You see, I'm leaving here."

"Transferred, Lieutenant?"

"Cashiered, Sergeant."

"No?"

"Well, nearly as bad. The 609 took my measure. The old boy says that I can't think. Says that I'd be a regular major in a tight place. But let that pass, Sergeant. T'hell with it. What I want is some De Haviland time. Can you give me a ship?"

"I have one D.H. over in the next hangar," the noncom said. "It's a good bus, too. As soon as flying office gives the word I'll have that crate out on the line for you. Going to fly alone?"

"Yes," Cab answered. "That is, unless you want to get a slip from flying office and come along."

"Not this chicken, Lieutenant," the sergeant snapped. "I won't crawl and beg them for a flying slip. Them days have passed. And I used to be plenty hot for the stuff, too. You know how it is—I used to fly night and day, right on the ground. And now I'll stay down for the rest of this hitch. I'll have a sand bag in the back pit of this ship. Then you can go here and there, do this and that, and nobody can see you. You'll get to like these big ships. Let's see, you flew pur-

suit over there, eh? All single-seater jobs. By the way, Lieutenant, what are you going to do on the outside?"

"Make a bid for air mail," Cab told the noncom.

"I thought so. That's what they all do. Between you and me, Lieutenant, I'm going over to air mail myself just as soon as my time runs out here. I'll see you there. Maybe out Frisco way."

The rain had stopped; but the field was puddled. A few minutes later, when Cab turned to quit the hangar, the noncom added:

"I'll have the macs shove the D.H. out to the deadline now. We'll give her motor a run and make sure that she's jake. Maybe you'll want to kick this bus around a few clouds, eh, Lieutenant?"

"Wouldn't be a bit surprised," Cab answered. He added, "But a slow boy with my lack of quick judgment must go easy. It's a fact, Sergeant, I don't react. Ask old 609. He knows. See you later if they don't clip my wings in the meantime."

Just outside the hangar's great open doors, out on the wide concrete apron, Cab came face to face with Squirt Zeno. Cab stopped and glared at the kid. The latter, taken by surprise, walked wide around the flying lieutenant. But, when a safe distance stood between them, the pest of Mitchel Field piped up:

"How about that ride, eh? How about giving me a hop as soon as flying begins?"

"See that?" Cab warned the kid, as he brought his big, booted right dog up where all might see. "I'll give you a ride on that if I catch you near the deadline again. Now git!"

Cab made as if to shag the kid; but the pest was on his way. Back over his shoulder he told Cab a few things. And when Squirt Zeno passed beyond sight and hearing Cab and the noncom broke down and laughed.

"That pest will get a ride yet," the sergeant said. "He's been putting the ride bee on every pilot on the field for the last two months. But they all love him just like you do. If I was a pilot I'd take him

up and toss him back from about ten thousand."

"Sergeant, you're a bad man," Cab decided, "with noble ideas."



AT FATIGUE call that same afternoon the sun was shining on both sides of the fence. The sky was big and clear. Flying office gave the glad order: Rise and fly. Mitchel Field began to resume air work.

When the sergeant and his starting crew strolled out to the deadline Cab was already there. The De Haviland was all set to go; and they sure had the big craft all shipshape. Looks, though, are of little account. A De Haviland, as Cab saw it, was just a pilot killing device.

"Is she all set to do it, Sergeant?" Cab asked.

"You bet, just as soon as a couple of these strongbacks can chain the prop, pull her over and start this swell Liberty to hitting. It won't be long now, Lieutenant. Hey, Johnson! And you, Keefe—get busy on the live end of this ship. Climb aboard, Lieutenant; and if there's anything about a D.H. instrument board that you don't savvy, just ask me. I'm smart and know everything. And as I said before, the rear seat is sandbagged. Without a sandbag a D.H. is hellishly nose heavy, Lieutenant. But with the bag she's jake."

"Sure the sandbag won't work loose, Sergeant?" Cab asked, as he peeked into the rear pit and took a look at the sack in question.

"Not a chance," the noncom stated. "I've tied it fore and aft. You'd have to bust the ship away from the seat to move that bag. Why, Lieutenant, I've done this job for majors and colonels."

Cab climbed ahead to the front pit. The sergeant, standing on the catwalk of the lower left wing, hung over the cockpit's gunwale and told the overseas man a few things about a Liberty's handling. A few words about motor speeds—cruising, diving and idling. Something about oil pressure and air pressure on the gas

tank. A word about the very important voltmeter—

"See that she doesn't flop her needle over and start reading 'discharge', Lieutenant."

Cab had listened with the air wise wisdom of a good pilot taking straight ship dope from a good mac, for by such things good pilots go right on with the business of living. But, while listening, Cab had noticed two gents strolling out on the field—the Majors Dunn and Zeno. "I got it, Sergeant," Cab cut in. "I'll be jake. Make it fast. Get those blocks out from under. Here comes the Old Man and 609. They might set me down."

The sergeant slid off that lower wing.

"Pull those blocks, Johnson," he growled; and the blocks were yanked. "Take 'er away!"

Right from a dead standstill on the line Cab hit the big bus on the tail with full gun—à la pursuit style. At the same time, he shoved the control stick clear ahead to the instrument board. Under such treatment the tail should have snapped up off the ground—right now!—and sent the big ship wheeling ahead, bouncing toward a quick take-off. But the tail did not come off the ground. Not a bit! So Cab eased the stick back—holding full power on her—and tried to pick up a bit more of rolling speed. Once more, a hundred yards out from the deadline, he muscled the stick far afront and fanned his rudder. It was no go. Nothing doing. That tail was like something that belonged on the ground, heavy, grating, bumping.

"That damned sandbag!" Cab thought. "A good noncom has done too good a job. Oh, well, if Kirkpatrick's swell D.H.'s won't come off the ground like regular ships, I'll play along with her and let her mush off all same training ship. Give her all the time she wants. I'm young and there's no big hurry now. Old Zeno can't run me to earth—"

The heavy running, tail down De Haviland had now rolled far beyond mid-field. And now, of a sudden, Cab realized that the tail skid was off the ground for the first time. But there was nothing to feel

gay about. His stick was as far ahead as it could possibly go. In other words, his good right arm was pushing with all his beef in an effort to hold that tail off the ground.

And Cab's brain, that supposedly faulty device which was very slow to react, was surely in low gear. He couldn't make head or tail of what was going on. The sergeant—and Cab had faith in that noncom—had said this was a good D.H. Well, if this was a good ship, then it was the pilot who was all wet. And if the bus was right, it was up to Cab to lift it into flight. Maybe, Cab figured as fast as his slow think box would work, this tail heaviness will quit the ship as soon as she gets into normal flight.

"Now," Cab said to Cab, "wouldn't I be a hell of an air nut if I should set this cull down right here, roll back to the dead-line, and say, 'She's too much for me.' Yeh, and old Zeno would yell, 'I told you so! My 609 is correct.'"

However, by that time, the rambling tonnage had eaten up just about the whole stretch of Mitchel Field's open plain; and Mitchel, as it goes out into the open spaces to the east, is no small bit of flat and green country. And now, coming to those eastern limits of the big field, Cab had the D.H. just off the ground—both wheels and tail skid free. But the stick was still full ahead; with the motor roaring at top speed; and lastly, and worstly, the ship was picking up no more altitude. Worse still, each flashing second of flight was adding its bit to the speed of the craft. What's more, gathering speed and being in actual flight wasn't doing anything toward the elimination of the tail heaviness. Which fact was enough to chill a man's brave heart; for Cab knew by then that it was no fault of the pilot.

To the right and left of his onward push—and not so far ahead—loomed a few of those large Long Island estates. Straight out front was a good sized clump of trees. To either side of this clump runs the much used highway. If Cab kicked in a little rudder, here and right now, he could miss that bunch of trees, and ground loop

to either right or left for a quick and hard landing. In this way he could save his own neck, but, perhaps, crash and kill a few motorists on the highway.

As a second choice, he might try bootstrapping his way over the barrier of trees and flop into a crash landing on the estate ahead. But all these estates, at this time of year, were alive with gardeners, tennis players and, maybe, visiting poor relations. Anyway, in another slow flash, Cab's brain told him that all those things were out. But the minute, and the very second of that minute, had arrived wherein and whereat something had to be done. No longer could human strength hold that heavy ship in flight. So, poor reaction or no reaction, Cab made his big decision; and guessed that he'd best take a chance on his own neck. And any Air Service man will tell you that this is the right thing for a pilot to do. Air Service men will even say that this is all the reaction needed by a game flyer. It's really air's gage of fitness.

Cab crashed the De Haviland into the clump of trees. Because the wide winged craft was merely bowling ahead tail down, he figured that he had half a chance, by cutting his power at the last second, to mush the job in for a pancake landing and crack up. He did. Wow! Stop!

The stop arrived and was complete, but not as easy as just *stop* sounds. When a rambling thing of some thirty-six hundred pounds has been moving at a rate somewhat better than a mile per minute, that bowling tonnage isn't going to quit its big parade and come to rest with the quiet ease of a dropped pillow. The De Haviland, before it stopped going, managed to bore its bow through the clump of trees. It also took some of the smaller trees right along with it. And, in passing, the craft left all four wings, and tail service, among the trees. It was really the fuselage and Cab who went the full distance. When the fuselage finally lost its momentum the motor and gas tank had parted company with the rest of the finely assorted wreckage. Cab and the

gas tank had gone out together. They rolled the same way, and the eight hundred-pound Liberty motor, luckily, rolled off at another angle. The long all-wood fuselage had snapped in two, neatly, just aft Cab's seat. The De Haviland was surely a ship of parts—all scattered. But Cab, sitting up and feeling around, discovered that he, if not the ship, was still all in one piece.

Cab felt lucky. Yes, he knew that he was lucky. So, in the great stillness that always seems to follow such a storm, he sat there and studied the wreckage. Besides being mighty thankful for coming through that mess Cab was equally as thankful that there was no sergeant riding in the rear pit. That rear pit and seat were sure one hell of a mess. From where he sat erect, Cab could see what was left of his sandbag. Nothing. It had been busted forty ways from the center. A man sitting where that bag had been might have fared just as bad. Yes, sir, sergeant, it was lucky that—

Cab shook his head and opened his eyes a bit wider. What now? Had he been knocked silly? Was he seeing things? Ye gods! he must be.

Something was moving in the wreckage of the tail. It, that moving something, was coming out at the opening where the rear seat had been. The moving thing was now clear of the tail. Squirt Zeno, blah-blahing and feeling to see if he was all there, stood erect and looked around. The boy was wabbly, but unhurt.

Cab stood erect, too. So here was the damned answer to this! And this was the damned answer to the ship's tail heaviness, plus the total loss of a craft that had cost Uncle Sam all of twenty-five thousand dollars.

"You!" Cab said, and closed his big right mitt around the pest's neck. "You—"

"You wouldn't give me a ride," Young Zeno wailed, "and—"

"Shut up!" Cab snapped, cupping a hand over the kid's mouth and bending an ear toward the open spaces west of the trees. Cab could hear the ambulance and

field service cars coming hell bent to his rescue for, of course, his landing had been seen from the deadline.

What was he to do now with this ornery kid? The kid, after all, was brave. At heart, perhaps, he and Cab were kindred spirits. Flight was the only thing each wanted; and this pest seemed to want it just as much as the man whose hand was on his neck. If seen, this mess would go hard on the pestiferous young Zeno. Also, and no two ways about this, it would put old Zeno in a tough spot. You can't cause the complete destruction of twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of ship, laugh it off and tell 'em that you were only fooling. But as for a pilot—well, a pilot can say the accident was unavoidable, faulty controls, motor failure, air pocket over the trees, and that's all there is to it.

The oncoming cars seemed very close. Cab could hear somebody yelling:

"Right here. In these trees. Ambulance, right here!"

And Cab, without much of a draw on his manhood, fought a quick battle and won. He said—

"Now, get t'hell gone!"

And to add speed to the kid's going, Cab put a boot on that part of the squirt where a boot will do the most good. The lank kid went through the underbrush, to the east, and didn't seem to resent the boot in the least. The kid was wise.

The Majors Dunn and Zeno were among the first to come through the trees. Lieutenant Cable, very military, saluted his commander.

"Are you hurt, Lieutenant?" Major Dunn asked.

"No, sir."

"What the devil were you trying to do, Lieutenant?"

"Practising landings, sir," Cab answered, which was flip.

"Ah!" Major Zeno ah-ed. "Lieutenant Cable, I told you so." Old Zeno turned to Dunn. "You see, Major, the lieutenant had good open field to either side of these trees. Also, the space just beyond, on that estate, is adequate for a forced landing. Yesterday, Major, the lieutenant

failed to pass his physical examination. He is to be taken off flying status. His papers should be in your office now. Yes, I told you so, Lieutenant Cable. You see, it was a tight place, and you froze. Didn't react. I told you so."

"Damned if you didn't, Major," Cab agreed.

"Lucky you weren't hurt, Lieutenant," Major Dunn again said. "Guess you'd better remain on the ground. Come along, we'll drive you back to the flying office. You'll want to make out your accident report on this crash. Damned lucky you didn't break your neck. What a mess!"

"I told you so," Major Zeno again said, as they were getting into the major's car. Again and again, with slight variations, the medical major repeated that same thing before they had arrived back on Mitchel Field. Major Zeno seemed happy too. Why not? "I told you so!"

"Yes, you're right enough, Major," Cab agreed, as he quit the car and went toward the flying office to fill out his last official flying report. Well, at least, it was a fast ending for a high pressure Air Service career. And Lieutenant Cab Cable went out with a stiff lip.



EX-LIEUTENANT CABLE, formerly of Air Service and known wherever American wings were spread simply as Cab, brought a certain amount of color to an already colorful service when he came to air mail.

Cab's first air mail assignment was on the Cleveland-Chicago hop of the trans-continental route. An assignment to that hop wasn't so hard to get, simply because, for some unknown reason, pilots were "lasting quick" on this particular stretch of sky. At that, the flat Cleveland-Chicago run wasn't the worst piece of air through which the mail was being flown. Not by a long shot! But—and no kidding—the run seemed jinxed. It was a big chunk of hell.

Within six weeks of the time of arrival in the Great Lakes territory the papers of

all neighboring big cities were speaking of Cab as "the veteran pilot of the Cleveland-Chicago run". Before the second month of service had closed Cab *was* the veteran of the hop. All this gives you a closer idea of the speed with which the Grim Reaper was running air mail men to ground.

But what was strangest was the fact that the papers of those big cities, and the papers and magazines of the nation, were writing up Cab as "the cool, quick thinking veteran of air mail". And they even mentioned the "seemingly impossible situations from which Pilot Cab Cable has extracted his ship and valuable mail matter in his charge".

Time moved on, as only time can. In the unraveling of those months and years that moved so fast Cab came to a status where he was picked out and set aside and spoken of as that Cable fellow who has been with air mail, actively, for two years. Then three years. Soon, along in 1926-27, he was "the old man of air mail". For a fact, at twenty-six years of old age Cab was an institution. A thing at which to be pointed with awe. Almost a tradition.

He wasn't now flying any regular mail carrying route, however. It was this way. Certain air mail officials had to be ferried here and there along the twenty-six hundred air miles of coast to coast air ways. Those officials, valuing their necks, chose the best pilot available. So Cab was the one elected. He also handled a great deal of the engineering work that went with the upbuild of that big air system. He tested new ships. Located new emergency fields. Went into strange mountain fastnesses to hop out stranded planes that other pilots had set down. A hundred and one odd pieces of flying business came his way. He was apt to be almost any place at any time. Withal he was mighty busy and well satisfied.

In the fall of 1927 he was out on the West Coast for quite a stay. Air mail organization on that coast has always been a matter of readjustment, more readjustment and still more readjustment—owing, no doubt, to the fact that the

Washington officials liked to run out there when they grow tired of eating snowballs in the East. But all kidding aside, the service was ever striving for new and better equipment. So the officials must move here and there to look things over. Hence, with the acquisition of new ships, air mail returned to Air Corps those De Havilands which were still in one piece. Not that there were so many to be returned, however. Still, the two-place De Haviland which Cab had been using for his ferrying of officials was yet in fair shape, when the time arrived to replace it with an up to date cabin job of West Coast build.

Cab had flown Superintendent of Air Mail Charles Hamme out to San Francisco on that occasion. So the super was on hand at the Bay City hangar when the new cabin ship was delivered at that field. And the super was like a kid with a new red toy, so he decided that they'd start back for the East Coast the following Monday morning. That was on Thursday.

"In the meantime, Cab," said the super, "why don't you take a few days off? You've had your nose to the stone for weeks. All work and no doings—well, you know what that does to a boy, eh?"

"Yeh," Cab answered. "It gets him right up top in big, busy business. However, I'll take a few days off. Tell you what I'll do. This old ship of ours should be turned back to the Army, just to prove that air mail can be honest. It came to us from Rockwell Field, San Diego. It should go back to Rockwell for reconditioning. Eh, Mr. Hamme?"

"The suggestion is good," Super Hamme agreed. "You do that, and try your best to get back here for an early start Monday. But if not Monday—Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday will do very well."

"I'll be back in plenty time," Cab promised. "I want to spend a day or two on North Island, with the lights of San Diego cross the bay. Some of my old gang are still answering calls there. Sunday I'll pick up a lift from some ship that will

be hopping out of Rockwell to Crissy Field, for there's always plenty of weekend travel between the south and here. There goes a couple of Crissy ships now—" Cab pointed westward to where two planes were lifting out of Crissy—"and I'll bet they're headed for Rockwell too."

An hour later Cab hopped out of San Francisco for the south. He was flying alone, but he wasn't at all lonesome.

That old ferry ship was a standard De Haviland. It had a gas capacity of eighty-six gallons. The airline distance from S.F. to S.D. is about four hundred fifty miles. That distance is just a little too much for the amount of gas Cab was carrying. So, like all such coastwise pilots, he counted on stopping in at Clover Field for refueling. Clover Field, on the western edge of Los Angeles, was, at that time, an Army Reserve field. It had two hangars, several old Army ships, and four sleepy mechanics. These macs liked visiting ships, that came for gas pumping, like India likes a plague. But, being civilian Army macs, they had to be civil—almost—and pump. Which was tough on them.

Anyway, to get back to Cab, at the end of three hours and twenty minutes he rolled to a stop at Clover's dusty dead-line. Clover's chief mechanic, picking his nose, rolled off a workbench and dragged out to where a cloud of dust was floating away from the visiting bus.

"How about a little gas and oil?" Cab asked.

"Where for?" the chief mac managed to ask, with effort.

"Rockwell," was Cab's brief answer, "if it makes any dif'."

"Twenty gas will do," the mac said, yawning. "Maybe no oil. Only a little better than a hundred miles, airline, to Rockwell. Don't kill the motor till you taxi closer to the gas hose. Come on."

Cab eased a bit of power to his bus, and the craft rolled up closer to the gas pump. Then he cut the gun and got set for what promised to be a long wait. The chief mac went inside the first hangar and tried his best to wake those of his helpers who

could be located. In a few minutes he was back with two boys who rubbed their eyes and yawned in a manner sad to behold. Tough war on the civies.

"What—another visiting crock!" came to Cab's ears. And the grumbling voice added, "Damn air mail dude too."

"Get on that gas pump," the chief mac ordered, "and shut up. And you, Johnson, you climb up there and take the gas cap off his tank. All set, Mac. Wind up that pump handle. 'Bout twenty gallons."

While the ship was being serviced Cab saw a car drive in from the highway and stop near Clover Field's headquarters building. Two men got out of the car. One was a tall young fellow; and the other was obviously the father of the tall member. The mechanic, Johnson, was still on the lower wing, so Cab spoke to him. Johnson woke up again.

"Who is that getting out of that car up at headquarters?" Cab asked.

Johnson stretched his neck and looked that way.

"Oh," he said, "that's old Captain Zeno. He's the new medical examiner for this corps area. He's assigned to this field now. He's got all his queer 609 machinery in the back room."

Captain Zeno, eh? So old Major Zeno had taken a post-war reduction? However, assignment to a place like Clover Field was more or less a plum; and regular Army officers have been known to fight and give their last drop of blood for such berths. Well, old Zeno stood, and noticing a visiting ship at the end of Clover Field's gas hose, the captain was coming down the line to see who was who. Maybe to gab a bit.

"That the captain's kid?" Cab asked Johnson.

"Yeh," Mechanic Johnson answered. "Young Zeno's a cadet now, over at Marsh Field, Riverside. Been on cadet status a couple of months."

"Say," Mechanic Johnson now cut off and cut in, "you know old Zeno and the kid, don't you? Weren't you back at Mitchel Field just after the war?"

"Yeh, I know them, and I was at Mitchel," Cab answered.

"Well, by hell!" Johnson cheered. "I thought I knew you. You gave me the first hop I ever had. Let's see, what's your name?"

"Cable."

"Cable, that's it. Hey, gang," Johnson yelled to the rest of Clover Field's able sleepers, "meet a *bon pilote*, a regular guy. Cable's the name. We used to fly together."

"Aw, horse feathers!" the mac on the pump growled. "You used to fly together! All you ever flew, Johnson, was a pick and shovel."

By now the two Zenos had reached the tip of Cab's right lower panel. They stood there studying the ship and apparently trying to place the pilot. Mechanic Johnson did the honors. He was wide awake now.

"You know this bird, Captain," Johnson said. "He was back at Mitchel Field right after the war. Cable's the name. Remember him now? He washed out a D.H. in that clump of trees way out east of Mitchel. Don't you remember that?"

"Why sure!" Captain Zeno now recalled. He came alongside and extended the fraternal hand of good fellowship. "How are you, Lieutenant? Glad to meet you again. Remember my boy, Jack, don't you?"

They shook hands all around. The boy was blushing. This kid had surely changed. He looked worthwhile.

"Not sore at me, Lieutenant?" young Zeno asked.

"Hell, no!" Cab emphasized. "Glad to hear you're flying."

Captain Zeno looked on with open surprise. Cab, seeing the old gent's bewilderment, said:

"The boy and I have our little secrets, Major. Beg pardon—Captain."

They all laughed it off.

"So you're still with air?" Captain Zeno remarked.

"Still with it," Cab answered. "After a fashion, Captain."

"Been with it right along, Lieutenant?"

"Since the day we parted, Captain."

"Strange," Captain Zeno mused. "Strange."

"Aw, hell," Cab kidded, "I'm pretty good, Captain. It's your damned old 609 that's all wet."

"No, sir," the medical man insisted. "Our examination is the best on earth. And I say, as man to man, you were not all right. Good Lord, some of you men get the idea that we're all against you. It's for the good of the Service, and for your own good, that we bar a man when we find that he falls short of the demanded fitness. Now you take things as they are today, half a dozen years after you and others failed, why you wartime men couldn't begin to qualify."

Young Zeno, red clear up behind the ears, had taken a hard look at the old gent and turned away. Cab laughed and said:

"Each man to his own game, Captain. Not in a thousand years could you and I agree on my much questioned condition. And maybe you're right. Who knows?"

The macs had finished servicing the ship. Cab got down from his high hoss and helped the boys put the heavy tail on a dolly and shove the bulky D.H. back to the starting platform.

"Are you flying south, Lieutenant?" Captain Zeno asked.

"Down to Rockwell," Cab answered. "I'm turning this old bus back to the Army. What's more, Captain, I've taken darned good care of it during more than fifteen hundred flying hours. Never cracked a skid."

Captain Zeno let that ride. He thought for a minute, while Cab climbed back to his front seat, then asked:

"Mind if I ride along with you, Lieutenant? I have a bit of business at Rockwell."

"Hop in, Captain," Cab invited. "I'll do my best by you."



THE Clover Field macs were just pulling Cab's prop through when a reserve officer came out of headquarters with a flying slip in his hand.

"How about a ship, Chief?" the reservist yelled.

Cab's motor was running by then.

"Come on, you guys," the chief mac barked. "Let's wind up a ship for this man. Come on, Johnson. And you, Mac."

"Who's going to pull these wheel blocks?" Johnson asked.

"I'll pull 'em, Johnson," young Zeno volunteered.

And so saying, the captain's son came around front of the warming D.H. He then stooped low and reached from his stand near the right wheel, under the nose of the ship, till he had a hold on the rope that was attached to the left block. He then pulled the left rope over, slowly, in such a manner as to be able to yank both blocks at the same time, when the word should come down from Cab. Young Zeno stood there, waiting.

Captain Zeno came hurrying from headquarters. He called a few last minute orders across the lower wing to his son, then climbed into the rear pit.

"All set, Lieutenant," he made known. "Let's go!"

The motor had revved at top speed, and satisfied Cab. It was a good Liberty, being able to turn out more revs per minute than the average. And perhaps, at that last hour, Cab felt sorry to think that he was about to quit the old servant. A flyer gets that way about a ship; for a plane, you know, is no inanimate thing. It has life. It is brave and bold. It roars and howls in the climb and zoom. It whistles and hisses in the dive. And it labors, shakes and battles in the stunt. In short, it becomes part of you. And you learn to love the craft.

"Got your safety belt on, Captain?" Cab turned to ask.

"Lord no! Wait a shake," the old man chirped. He tied in.

Cab grinned and winked at young Zeno.

"All right, Cadet," he called. "Pull those blocks. And good luck with your flying."

Now, as said, young Zeno was standing at the right side of the ship. That was the side toward the hangars. The take-

off on Clover is always right down the hangar line into the west; for a constant wind comes off the Pacific two miles away. Clover Field is also a short field. A pilot with a heavy ship must get under way quickly and lift out of that small space without any foolin'. So, with D.H., even though this type of bus is never slow on the getaway, a man hits her on the tail and gets off as soon as possible. Sooner the better!

Cab saw young Zeno answer his pull order with a wave and a yank. At the same time, young Zeno did just what ninety-nine out of a hundred macs will do. He fell from view below the leading edge of the wide D.H. lower wing. Cab took it for granted that the boy had squatted down, with blocks pulled, intending to let the outgoing plane pass its wings over his head. Cab put power to his ship. Before the ship had moved ahead a yard, its tail was off the ground. Then, next second, with all those horses working under the long hood, the big craft was on its way. A D.H. waits not upon the order of its going, either.

The average pilot, on the take-off, guards well against the live side of the field. That is, there's usually one side of a runway space where incoming ships are likely to make their setdowns. Clover Field, being a one-way field, is very easy to watch. So Cab gave all his attention, during those first few bouncing seconds, to the left side.

After less than a hundred yards of run, the D.H. had its wheels off the ground. But by now Cab's heart was in his mouth, for he had a hunch that something was all wrong with this take-off. There had been dull thumping, a vibration perhaps, working through the craft. And now, with the ship only a few feet off the ground, that same queer vibratory slap-slap continued. It was a new one on Cab. Was old Zeno going to prove his jinx? A sickening premonition sat heavily upon the slow thinker. Yes, sir, perhaps this was his day, after all. Something was sure going haywire! No two ways about it, either.

Could the old Liberty be kicking her con-rods through the bottom of the crank-case? Could the propeller be out of balance? Maybe a blade tipped itself on one of those blocks when young Zeno pulled them. Cab now recalled the kid's fancy block pull.

Cab, for the first time, turned to look left, back toward the hangars, young Zeno and the blocks; and heaven help us—he saw only young Jack Zeno. And that one look was enough for a lifetime!

Young Jack was dangling, by one leg, at the end of a chock block rope. The other end of the rope, Cab knew in a flash, was tangled in the landing gear. The boy had taken all the pounding and bumping of the take-off, and now he was just a rag on a line. His inert, long and light body waved out in the slipstream, halfway back to the tail surfaces. That slipstream was a propeller blast of one hundred thirty-five miles, or better, per hour; and what that could do to a boy was awful.

Captain Zeno noticed Cab's wild stare. Then the father saw what was to be seen. The old gent just froze there, wild eyed and mouth agape. Young Jack, for the time being, was beyond suffering; but what the captain must have suffered is beyond words. And what could he do!

But it was no time for words. No time, even, for thought. Not even if there was a quick thinker on the job to do that fast guessing. But a split second after Cab had seen young Zeno, that D.H. was lying over in a steep left bank. The nose of the big ship was up, too, and she was climbing in that left bank. And the dangling boy was slapping the bottom of the ship less violently. And the D.H. was lying over more and more. Then there came a moment, and a place in the ship's bank, where Jack Zeno was on the bottom side of the fuselage. But the bottom side of that fuselage was no longer the bottom side of the ship. For the ship was on its back. Squarely on its back, and Captain Zeno was hanging from his safety belt. However, he was not noticing this.

Captain Zeno looked down, or out, or

up, now—and saw the Pacific just ahead. Something told him that somebody was doing some thinking. Also, the old M.D. realized that this thinking somebody was in a tight place. It was the kind of a tight place where a 609 flunker would be out of luck. But his glorified 609 was far from the captain's mind.

On its back a De Haviland has two directions. One of those directions is *ahead*, and at a hell of a speed, or it can't remain on its back for long. The other direction is down. The down part depends a great deal upon the motor and the pilot. But the downward mushing is always going on, for, with a half ton of motor, radiator and tanks on her nose, a D.H. can't fly on her back. Years ago, back at Mitchel Field, didn't the hangar sergeant tell Cab all about this nose heavy bug in the D.H.'s get up? He sure did.

When Cab slapped that big ship over on her back, at the top of his quick, banked climb, the altitude had reached perhaps three hundred feet. Not more than that. But with the good Liberty that this D.H. had, the loss of altitude wasn't as fast as you'd expect; and the few short miles between Clover Field and the Pacific had been pretty well eaten up before a plan of battle had been lined up in Cab's head. The off sea wind was pretty stiff. With that roaring nose bucking right into that wind, there was a good chance that the ship would reach the sea before her allotted altitude had played out. But if she couldn't stretch that inverted glide as far as the Pacific, then it would be worse than too bad. That few miles of country between Clover and the sea is built up solid, with no open spaces where you can land on even a normal setdown. To say nothing of trying the upside-down thing.

Cab was piloting the flight of his career; and holding young Zeno in place on the under side, which was topside now. Cab could see the tight chock block rope where it cut back from the landing gear's spreader bar to the boy's ankle. Things would be jake just so long as the boy re-

mained unconscious and didn't move. But if he began to come to, and wiggled off his precarious perch—well, the colors would go to half staff for one cadet. Yep, as he saw the thing, Cab's only choice was an upside-down landing in the ocean. It was worth a try, at any rate.

Out on the bay, off Santa Monica, were half a dozen fishing boats. In these boats Cab placed his last hope. They were scattered over miles of water; and it would be strange if one of them couldn't get to the D.H. before it went under.

Those fishing boats were close now. Cab could see the faces that looked up from one of those boats. This boat, at least, was wise to the fact that a plane was in trouble. And that boat was headed in the correct direction. Cab felt satisfied that he'd splash water not more than a quarter of a mile ahead of the small craft's bow. It should come alongside, and the rest—

The time to splash water arrived. And Cab, as he tried to lift the nose a bit higher—in order to hit flat—just simply begged that Liberty for a few more revs. And with the stick clear ahead to the instrument board—as of old—that nose did go skyward, just for seconds. Cab felt the swishing jar that came when the rudder cut the surface; and all control had gone off his craft. He was getting wet. He was putting a hand on the buckle bar of his safety belt. Now he was kicking free of his seat, and swimming. But Captain Zeno was still strapped in and fighting. He had put a knot in his safety belt, just to make sure it would hold, and it was holding. Under water Cab and the captain fought that knotted belt, then fell away from the ship. Hands reached down and pulled them to safety. There wasn't much life in either.

The fishing boats, two of them to be exact, were there. The D.H. was still there too, but sinking fast. And the crews of the boats had removed young Jack Zeno from his bed of roses. Fortunately, there were three doctors aboard one of the passenger carrying fishing boats.

"Your boy, Captain," one of these M.D.'s said, "will be O.K. He has both arms fractured, with a compound fracture of the left. How the devil did this thing happen?"

"Good Lord!" Captain Zeno exclaimed. "Don't ask me."

"I'll tell you," a feeble voice put in. "I yanked both blocks at once. The near block, the right one, came free. The left block stuck a bit. Then I gave it a quick jerk. It flew back through the landing gear's brace wires and tangled there. The other block, the free one, had wound its rope around my ankle. Both blocks were tied together. I know. I tied them myself, while I was standing there. And—" the boy's voice broke—"and, dad, I wrecked Lieutenant Cable again."

"What d'y'mean—again?" Captain Zeno demanded.

"Why, dad, back at Mit—"

"Shut up, kid!" Cab snapped. He tried to sit up now, and made the grade. "The kid's rambling, Captain. You lay down, kid, and take it easy. You've been dragged through all kinds of assorted hell, and you don't seem to know it. There's no harm done. It was an old ship that we were turning back to the Army for salvage. There'll be no hell to pay for this. Just an accident. So lay down. Keep him quiet, Doc."

Cab was pretty groggy. He had more than his share of loose water. But he rambled right along:

"And, kid, your dad and I will give up our share of the Pacific just as fast as we can. Say, has the time honored fashion of rolling guys on barrels gone out of date? I'm getting sick and nobody seems to care."

The three fishing doctors and the rest of the passengers laughed. Then a few more things were done for Cab and the captain. By the time that boat pulled up at the Santa Monica pier Cab was feeling pretty gay. He knew that a good job had been done in a fast, workmanly fashion. He was sorry to think that he had gunned that ship's take-off without first making sure that the kid was free. But, after all, a pilot must take it for granted that the man on the blocks knows what he's doing. Anyway, Cab was satisfied that he himself wasn't slowing up. It was a stunt for the rest of the flying gang on the Coast to shoot at. Bet they'd talk about this for a week or two!

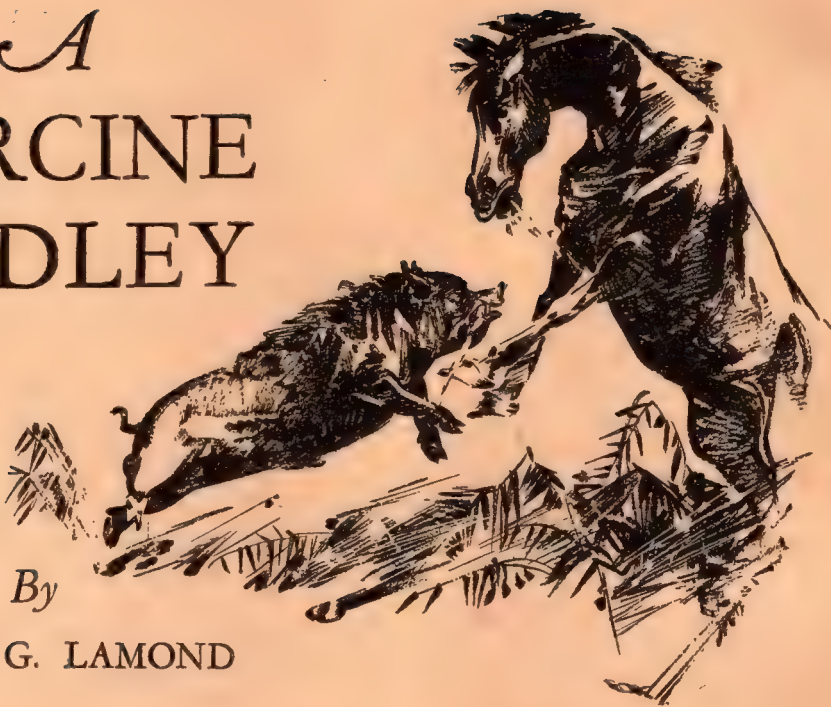
But the captain was down in the mouth. After four husky boatmen had improvised a stretcher from some oars and netting, Captain Zeno was the last one to step onto the pier and follow the small parade toward waiting automobiles. Cab waited for the old boy.

"What's wrong? Sick, Captain?" he asked.

"No, not very," Captain Zeno mumbled. "Just sick of myself, that's all. Second time he wrecked Lieutenant Cable. Back at Mitchel Field, eh? Me—dumb ass!—barring you from Air Service! Told you you couldn't think in a tight place. Good Lord! Where would we be now if you couldn't think? And that other crash—my kid in that—in the tail, eh? And me, dumb old ape, yelling, 'I told you so.' By Godfrey!" The old gent stood there on the pier and looked back toward the anchored fishing fleet. "I think I'll buy me one of these boats, just a little, no-count boat, and go into the fishing business. That's where I belong."



A PORCINE MEDLEY



By

HENRY G. LAMOND

THE BANKS of the waterhole were bare. Coolibah trees drooped listlessly in the still heat, and not a breath of wind stirred their leaves. An old sow wallowed in the foul scum and floating sediment which formed the waterhole, grunting her contentment. She was lean and slab sided, racer-like in appearance, and with a long snout which bespoke but little breeding. She was a wild pig, the far progeny of some sty-fed animal, and for generations the hand of evolution had molded her in conformity with the conditions under which she had to live. She had to hustle for her living. She had to fight for her life. She had to have the ability to lay long miles behind her. Her build adapted her to this.

Farther out in the mud and slime of stinking filth her litter of six rummaged noisily. They tramped and wallowed. Regularly each piglet dived its head under till only its ears showed above the surface. When it withdrew its head a loud champing of its jaws and a gulping told of some dainty discovered: a lily root, a

mussel, a torpid crayfish, a water beetle or anything at all of the assortment of things which a wild pig will call food.

A red patch drifted out from a patch of lignum on top of the bank. It slid down the bank and remained still. That body was so silent, and its coloring and actions harmonized so with its surroundings, that almost it could be a floating shadow or part of moving earth. It was a dingo—the wild dog of Australia. It surveyed the scene; almost it seemed to smile; and deliberately it seemed to take its pick of the suckers in the mud of the hole. Then it lay still, its feet gathered under it.

A lazy willy-willy came spiraling over the bank, picking up stray leaves and odd straws of grass. It whirled over the crouching dingo, plucking lingeringly at its hairs as it passed, and slowly that shaft of revolving air dawdled along the bank. It turned at right angles as if to pass over the surface of the water. For a beat of a second it played above the sleeping sow, and—

“Woof!”

Eleven or twelve generations previously those suckers had been sty-fed and safe from the world's alarms. Scents which did not carry the taint of food meant nothing to them, and the only sound they understood was the clanking of pails which brought them meals. But when that dread alarm sounded the piglets never hesitated. In racing lines they ploughed through the mud and water. They made straight for their mother, chuckling and gurgling as they came. One little fellow, farthest away when the alarm sounded, squealed in arrant fear of the danger he knew was there.

The dingo casually rose to his feet, his lips laid back and his ears pricked. Carefully he looked over the litter, and almost with nonchalant deliberation he stretched himself and yawned. Then he advanced on the group clustered together.

The old sow swung herself between her babies and the death which came to them. Cold fear may have been biting her heart; but she challenged bravely and snapped and grunted as the dog came near. With her anger unabated, and with the same fiery fussiness with which she faced the dingo, she shepherded her brood about her and led them up the bank. She swelled as she waddled, and almost it seemed the old thing was on the point of bursting with suppressed rage. She swung and turned and doubled. She fumed and fretted and challenged. She chided her youngsters and champed at the dingo. And all the time she was on the needle-point of guard and on the hair trigger of attack.

Again and again the dog feinted. Each time the sow stood her ground to meet him. Then he came with a lunge so rare and a rush so determined that the sow charged to meet him. The dog missed her thrust by less than the breadth of one of his own hairs. He hit the ground, sprang aside, bounced and was in the litter.

Things happened with a rush. There was a clash of teeth, a snap, a scurry of feet, a squeal of pain, a hoarse grunt of anger and another charging rush. A cloud of dust hid things from sight, and up the bank ribbons of dust rose in

streams as the litter fled for safety to the cover of the lignum.

The dingo had a sucker wriggling between his paws. Across its loins a hideous red weal showed. A mother pig bereft of all reason was charging that grinning death. She charged, reckless with despair and senseless with hate. She offered her life in protection of her young. She came in a whirling rush, and when she reached the spot where her enemy had been he was not there! He, grinning insolently, stood ten feet up the bank and awaited the sow's next move. It came! Barely taking time to sight her foe, she charged again. But she met only empty space and champed free air. And as she spun on her hind legs another squeal of pain sounded behind her. The dingo had slipped in behind her and slashed the sucker again.

The sow mothered her squealing baby. The dingo lay and waited. Hawks spiraled above and wheeled in a still sky. An occasional willy-wagtail sang its rusty song and doubled in pursuit of an elusive insect. An odd bubble broke the surface of the hole, the widening ripples showing where some water beetle had gulped a mouthful of air. Nothing else moved. Five minutes passed. Ten, twenty, half an hour slid by on leaden wings. The sow faced the dog. The dog looked anywhere but at the sow. The sow's nerves were at breaking point.

Then from a hundred yards down the creek a grunting sounded. One of the brood of suckers had come to seek its mother. It was a black boar, the biggest of the litter, and distinguished by a white blaze on his face which marked him almost similar to a Hereford bull. As though that boar's squealing had sounded the "all clear" signal other bushes erupted young pigs and the whole litter came into being.

The dingo rose to his feet. He licked his chops and quivered. He slid belly to earth and waited at a patch of lignum for the brood of piglets to pass him within striking distance.

It was too much for the sow. With a grunt of rage she charged. Immediately

the advancing suckers broke and galloped. And at their rear, moving them to frantic squeals of fear as they raced, was the dingo.

The sow followed on, running by sound. As she raced there came from behind her the death cry of a pig in its agony. She turned and charged back. The little fellow, sorely wounded, had tried to follow his mother. And as he labored a red fiend had dropped out of the lignum and snapped off his life as one flicks an electric switch. It was the dingo. The hunt of the fleeing troop was merely a ruse to coax the mother from the sucker he had already marked as his own.

The sow charged back in a surging rush of rage; but the dingo easily evaded. He knew he could wait. He knew it was only five minutes at the most and the mother would follow the rest of the litter. Instinct perhaps told him the sow would leave sooner if he kept out of sight. The dingo hid himself in a patch of lignum. In five minutes, silence reigning again, the dog came out. The body of the wounded sucker lay on the bank, and only a droning fly buzzed over it.

The sow gathered her litter and went straight on down the creek. Her massive shoulders worked like mighty pistons, and five suckers squealed and grumbled as they trotted behind her. She turned in once where radiating pads of stock told her there was water. She drank, wallowed and cooled herself for an hour. Then she took up the line again, turning not to the right or to the left and throwing miles behind her all through the long night. She turned in to another hole and wallowed and grunted in contentment while the suckers fought at her udders.

Fifteen miles back the ants and scavenging beetles were swarming over the few remnants of a sucker left on the bank of a waterhole.



FROM the pigs' point of view, all went well in their new home. No dingoes troubled them, and the suckers were too big to be afraid of that death from the skies—the eaglehawk. Mussels in plenty

were hidden in the mud of the hole; occasional sheep were bogged and made a sumptuous meal before they could free themselves; cane grass grew on the banks, water lilies were there in profusion, and the pigs were satisfied.

At about four months the old sow's diminishing milk yield forced the little fellows to forage for themselves. But they kept together, being held by the gregarious law of the pack. While rummaging in the mud of the hole one day a couple of horsemen rode over the bank. The old sow took the lead as they scattered. Squealing as they ran, the suckers trailed behind.

"Hey," one of the men called. "Twig th' Hereford! Watch me give 'em a start. Whoa, Bally," he shouted, uncoiling his whip and bringing it down on the white faced fellow. "Whoa, there!"

When that thunderclap burst on him, and that red hot sear of the cracking whip bit him, Bally doubled in on himself and raced for his life. His squeal of agony was bitten short in his terror, and he fled. And behind him, doubling when he doubled, swinging when he swung, holding him for pace and rending the air with those devastating claps of thunder while burning lightning struck his body, was a shouting fiend whose bursts of laughter echoed Bally's screams of pain.

Bally galloped till he rolled in his stride, till his gasping lungs refused to keep pace with his pounding heart, till he was blind from exhaustion and senseless with despair. Then, his baby spirit rising, he turned to meet the devil who pursued him.

The man laughed once and slashed his whip across the pig's face. He shouted in glee as the harmless sucker charged. Then he rode away.

Bally watched him go while strings of saliva fell from his champing jaws. He sucked in great buckets of air, and his throat burned like a live coal. Gradually the red faded from his eyes. He lay down, and perhaps he was content to stay there. He was out on the open-plains, miles from water, and perhaps without a

glimmering of the direction of his homeland. He turned round once in the grass, beating down a lair for himself. He lay with the stoicism animals possess, content, seemingly, to add one more whitening skeleton which the bush makes of man and beast.

Once, after sundown, he staggered to his feet, and his breath rattled in his throat as he sucked it in. The moon rose and odd clouds floated across the sky. Bally stayed where he lay, and the fever of his overheated body racked him as he panted for air. Suddenly he sprang to his feet as the crash of the stockwhip broke on him again. He crouched and trembled, and almost his cringing body quailed before the lash he expected. He lifted his head again as the smell of damp earth came to him on the air. He heard the churning patter of raindrops falling, and over his harsh skin and baking body that brought relief. He drew long breaths of that damp air. He wallowed in the mud. He drove through the pelting rain and again took up the battle of life. He stumbled on blindly through the choking dark, and with the morning's light he found himself back again on the creek, though a few miles distant from the place where his troop had been scattered.

Bally wandered in search of company. He came across a sheep bogged in the soft earth of the downs. Bally attended its obsequies. He ripped and tore that sheep's flank, spitting mouthfuls of wool till he reached the skin. The sheep had plunged once. Then, with the patient disregard of its kind, it made no effort to get away. Without so much as the blink of an eyelid it stood there while the pig noisily champied at its quivering flesh. Bally completed his meal, found himself a lair and slept in comfort.

In the course of his wanderings he picked up with other pigs of about his own age and sex. Sows with litters did not want him near them. Old boars would not tolerate the youngsters. Young sows did not seek their company and, should a young boar chance on one,

speedily would an old boar have robbed him of his spoils. Bally and his mob held together only by the law. They roamed, fed, squabbled and fought, and followed behind at a respectful distance when they found a mob of sows—they followed till the lord of that mob turned and dispersed them in rage.

At a little more than a year old Bally left his mob. He sought a mate which the urge of sex demanded. He was a glorious specimen of a pig, the muscles of his neck and flank rippling as he trotted along with his great limbs pounding the ground. Layers of fat rolled about his neck; he glistened with health; his markings distinguished him from other pigs, and he moved easily and without haste. A sullen temper burned within him, and his pinpoints of eyes blazed red when the sun struck them and reflected from his ivory shining tusks.

Suddenly he stopped his wandering! Across the pad in front of him a living rope was weaving its way and shining in glistening rays as it wriggled. It was a snake—a six-foot brown that carried messages of death in its fangs.

A snake's heritage is a lordly disdain of others. They have always had the right of the road, and others make way for them when they travel. The brown was no exception. When the earth vibrations of a traveling animal came to it the snake ignored that message. But when the footbeats stopped close to it the brown reared itself the better to view. Its head swayed on a swinging neck two feet from the ground. Its lidless eyes shone dully like pebbles. Its forked tongue flickered in and out, tasting the air for sound, and from an open mouth the low hiss of escaping steam sounded. It marked its foe. Its neck flattened. Its hiss took a higher note. The flickering tongue seemed to vibrate, so fast it moved. It drew its hinder part into a long loop, tense and ready, and with its head drawn back on its arched neck it waited the commencement of the fight. There could be but one winner—the snake knew that!

As the snake coiled Bally began to

swell. He swung side-on. He lowered his head. His neck bulged. His body rose like an inflated balloon. His loins arched and he drew his lean, sturdy legs under him.

He knew! Though he had never seen a snake, previously he knew that fearsome thing. He knew the best way to combat it and the racing death it carried. He sidled toward the living lash. He moved proppily. He jerked on his wooden stilts of legs which never took a stride greater than three inches. With his neck and shoulders nearest his opponent he came to the fight.

The snake struck. There was just a blur of light, a smudge of action, and the snake's head dropped back on its coils.

Bally stuttered in his stride slightly as that tap took him on the neck. He sensed those needle fangs sink in, and he may have had a premonition of their worth. An age old instinct may have told him the virus would waste itself in the folds of fat under his skin, and that not more than a homeopathic dose would reach his blood. He continued to advance, neck and shoulders forward, and his body inflated.

The snake struck again. Again, again, and yet again that living whip flashed, coiled, sprang, returned and darted. Once it held for a moment, worrying as a dog does, and in that momentary pause it essayed to throw a loop about its intended victim.

Bally tore into the fight. He relaxed his cramped body. With chopping teeth and tearing trotters he stamped and chewed, tore and stabbed, wrenched and heaved. He sank his teeth in that body about the middle. He lifted and shook while spiraling coils of glinting sunlight played about his head. He dropped the body and struck with a cleaving foot at the winding neck. He dived suddenly and took hold with his teeth.

The snake went limp and slack, its head falling listlessly as its back was bitten through and its long brown body cut in half.



THEN Bally dined. He pulled the snake's head from its body, taking it in his teeth and planting his front feet on its body.

He spat that on the ground and rolled the body in his mouth as he ground it to pulp. And when he had finished there was nothing but a few foraging ants and some shreds of what had been a snake.

Bally sought a near hole. He wallowed in the mud and he slept in the shade of the trees. He wandered on again that afternoon. A grunting ahead of him of one of his kind moved him to added pace. On a claypan flat a young sow came toward him. Behind her followed a boar. Bally never hesitated. He swelled himself, arching his loins and sinking his chin in on his chest. He pawed the ground in waves of dust, and he grunted his challenge to his enemy.

The other boar was old, scarred with many battles, hoary of skin and long of tusk. He knew the etiquette of battle. He knew the boar opposite was challenging him for his mate. He was too short sighted to note what that adversary might be. But he never hesitated. Like an avalanche in motion he rolled to the attack, and like a whirlwind in its fury he ripped up the dust as he came. Straight and true as a striking snake he charged, disdaining any guard as he flung his weight and gnarled body in a ripping thrust at his foe.

Bally went down. He was game. He had the will to conquer. His spirit urged him to attack. But he was only a straw in the wind compared to the weight of the boar opposed to him. He was tossed in the air and thrown aside. Without shame he fled. And as he raced for shelter a great wound which commenced at his flank and finished near his hip opened and shut, quivering horribly in its contortions. But though he was ripped and torn his wounds were not serious. Those thick layers of fat shielded the blood vessels, and in a week or more, with healthy living and a plentiful b-daubing of mud, his wounds were gone and the scars remained as marks of honor.

Bally continued to take what life had to offer. One day, while roaming along the creek, he came upon a ewe with a newly born lamb at foot. Careless almost in his insolence Bally brushed the ewe aside, snapped up the lamb between his jaws, crunching it through the back even as a man might munch a crisp biscuit. He dismembered the body, swallowing it in gulping mouthfuls while the mother ewe raged about him, and after that titbit he went to the hole to wallow.

When about two years old he sought a mob of his own. Up along a dark gully at the head of a creek an old sow had already given birth to a litter of six, each with the white face marking of its sire. But odd sows roaming singly did not suit Bally's taste. He desired the right to lead his own mob to water, to have a run of his own, and to keep usurpers from his territory. As the first warm breath of summer came the desire intensified in him and he sought means to accomplish it.

He went to Pint Pot Hole. He came out boldly on the bank and challenged. His bristles were standing erect. His eyes were glinting fire. His forefeet raked billows of dust over his back. His challenge brought the rightful lord of the domain hurrying up the bank.

When twenty feet separated them they paused. They swelled their bodies and arched their loins. They approached in curving lines. They stopped again.

As though fired by a mutual impulse both boars charged. While one might flick an eyelid or snap a breath those combatants met. As they swung and pushed open wounds appeared as if by magic along the necks of both of them. They ripped and tore and thrust. They fainted and sprang apart. They charged and slashed with shining tusks. Light footed as dancers they evaded attacks, sullen as a mammoth in motion they rolled to the charge. The fighting was too close to be spectacular; but of its earnestness there could be no doubt. They pounded hard. They pounded often. They slipped along till each head

was at the other's flank, and then the cold intensity of the fight was devilish in its horror. Each brute ripped the other's flank and pounded till one would break. No let up, no science, no quarter, no guard and no evasion.

The rightful owner of the territory was the first to feel the strain. He flinched ever so slightly from those devastating broadsides which were raking him. He weakened a trifle in the attack. Bally pressed home yet closer and drove and ripped and thrust with renewed energy. In the next shutter click there was one boar doubling in on himself, throwing dirt and gravel behind him and fleeing for his life. And behind him, rooting when an opportunity offered, and adding to the discomfiture of the vanquished foe, was Bally.

With the coming of winter, full and fat, Bally left the mob and wandered away by himself. Sour tempered, sullen, arrogant to a degree and bumptious, he wandered alone and cared nothing for company. A couple of mounted men saw him. With a dog they chivvied him. Bally did not actually run from them. He ripped the dog when it annoyed him too closely, and then for his own peace of mind he burst through the fence into Split Link Paddock. He followed the pads which led to the Lily Holes and found other pigs there. Bally ignored those pigs. Solitary and morose, he fed alone and dragged lily roots from the mud for his own benefit.

Horses were running in Split Link Paddock. One day Bally came upon a sick foal. His wicked little eyes smoldered as he surveyed it. He came nearer and brushed against it. As the foal swung weakly to kick Bally ripped—he tore from the flank up, and then he feasted fully.

That easy victory bred a new insolence in Bally. He did not bother to go round horses which were in his way when coming or going to water. As he brushed against them he grunted and thrust, and always the horses cleared a road for him. He carried on to the end of winter, and with

the returning warmth of summer, when his own blood was commencing to run red in his veins again, a new lot of horses were put in the paddock. Among them was a creamy pony, Joker—a rogue, a spiteful kicker, and a pensioner. Joker also wandered by himself. He was not a good mate for another horse, and his vicious temper made him shunned.

The second day in Split Link, as Joker was wandering out from water, he met Bally coming in. Joker made way for neither man nor beast. Bally claimed the right of the road always. He brushed against Joker as he passed, grunted once and ripped up with his tusks. That cutting thrust tore through the flesh of Joker's foreleg and fired his sullen temper. Bally stood his ground, and Joker swung on him.

With a squeal of anger Joker dropped his head. His teeth raked along the pig's back, lifting only hair, and came together with a snap. He reared and struck, and Bally shook under the impact of those battering rams of hoofs.

Bally was merely sullen before. Now red anger flamed to hate, and he charged. And as he came in two thunderbolts of lashing hoofs took him—one on the shoulder and one on the neck. One merely bruised him. The other lifted a long flap of skin and tore a mass of quivering flesh which hung down the pig's side.

Joker stood poised, swinging his head like a snake about to strike, and with red fire sparkling from his eyes. Bally's bristles rose. He commenced to champ his jaws and, shuffling on impatient feet, he waited an opportunity to charge.

Like flashing light he came. Like the snap of an explosion Joker's heels met him—heels charged with hate and driven in anger. One glanced off his ribs. The other landed square on the left tusk, lifting it out and sending it spinning to the ground. And as it lay there, a mass of flesh pulsing at its roots, Bally went on unchecked. He smashed against Joker's side, rocking him where he stood, and up Joker's ribs broad bands of blood sprang

into being where Bally ripped with his toothless jaw. The pig swung under, lifting as he swung, and brought his right tusk to play under the pony's brisket.

Joker staggered. The blood gushed from that gaping wound, and that crimson tide raced with life and death. Joker charged. With his head low, with his teeth bared, with his tail held high and his mane standing erect that living fury of a horse carried death to his opponent. He might die. He would die game! One battering forefoot took Bally across his massive shoulders and he shook beneath that blow. He braced himself to meet the next. It came! It smashed on the waiting pig and beat him to the ground.

Bally struggled to rise. He rose to his forefeet, and his hindquarters trailed limp and helpless behind him. That last lucky blow from Joker had taken the pig across the loin coupling, smashing that tender joint and irrevocably breaking his back.

Joker stood aside with low hung head and drooping tail. While he stood life's red stream ran from him in gushing spouts, and slowly he turned and made to a neighboring tree. For ten minutes he stood there, and then as weakness came to him he made an effort to walk. He trembled, and when he lifted one braced leg he staggered. He fought gamely to recover himself, and he sank in a heap to the ground.

Bally was no coward. He may have known he was done. But he bit the bullet and refused to cry for help. Painfully, slowly, an inch at a time and with infinite labor, he dragged himself to the shelter of a tree. He lay down. When he attempted to rise his hindquarters anchored him to the spot, and all his struggling front feet could do was to take him round and round in endless circles.

And three days later a man passing that way stopped his horse for a minute to note a few scraps of creamy hide under one tree, a few scattered bones and wisps of horse hair, while under another, bloated and horrible in death, was a white faced boar which had been known as Bally.



DESERT AMBUSH

By GEORGES SURDEZ

THE following is not fiction: It is a graphic presentation of an actual episode of the French Foreign Legion, based on the story told the author by participants, a few hours after its occurrence. In its sheer drama and tragic implications few tales, real or fanciful, of these famous soldiers surpass it. As Mr. Surdez says, "I could not write it in fiction form, for no one would believe."

THREE-THIRTY in the afternoon of December 8th, 1928.

Speeding under the ardent Saharan sun on a stony trail sketched across a range of hills, a motor car headed for Colomb-Béchar, sixty-seven kilometers away. It was the first of three military automobiles which had started that morning from Beni-Abbès, a strong outpost to the southward, and planned to reach their destination by evening.

The leading automobile was a light Fiat truck occupied by three men: Cavalry Sergeant Etienne commanding, Legionnaire Decaud at the wheel, and a negro soldier, going on leave, bouncing with the baggage in the rear. All three

were cheerful, happy, for compared with the desert, they knew the oasis town of Béchar was the Promised Land. There ended the railroad that sliced down Algeria from Oran on the sea; there one might purchase newspapers a day old, there one might obtain iced drinks. The local cafés had an arrangement with the train conductors so that ice could be brought down in the refrigerators of the dining cars. Colomb-Béchar meant ice—and civilization.

Sergeant Etienne was undoubtedly aware that he was far in the lead, out of sight of the car following. And he must have known that general orders were that cars in the same convoy must keep together, to render mutual assistance in

case of need. But as his machine had a bad habit of breaking down, he had been instructed to gain as much ground as possible. Obviously, it was easier for the others to overtake him than it would have been for them to retrace their way to him.

His responsibility was completely covered, for not merely had he orders from a superior, Captain Pasquet, but those orders had been spoken before Colonel Clavery, who was now in the second car. As the colonel was commander-in-chief of the Ain-Seffra Territory, which included this section of the desert, no one could blame him for obeying without protest.

Of all men who came into contact with him, Etienne liked and admired most Colonel Clavery. The bearded officer was a soldier in every way, a man who understood soldiers; he blended discipline with the right measure of tact and kindness.

Moreover, Colonel Clavery knew the Sahara; he had commanded in turn all four territories into which France has divided her desert holdings. Yet, in contrast with the majority of Saharan officers, he had not allowed his imagination to be gripped by the desert.

Clavery never carried caution too far. Sergeant Etienne had been aware, as had all the members of the party, that there had been some argument before the start. In an outpost such as Beni-Abbès, a few buildings huddled near the first gigantic dune of the Great Erg, little could be spoken that would not be known by all within the hour.

Colonel Clavery was nearing the end of a prolonged tour of inspection, which had led him as far as the Ahaggar, "Heart of the Sahara." He had a wife at Ain-Seffra and was eager to reach home without further delay.

The captain commanding at Beni-Abbès had suggested that the party should delay its departure. He pointed out that raiding bands from Tafilalet and the southern slopes of the Mid-Atlas were reported circulating nearby. These

bands might prove dangerous, for the colonel was forty-eight hours late on his schedule, and the mounted detachments of native auxiliaries which had been strung out along the trails to guard his passage had returned to their posts, with their horses tired out and suffering from thirst.

His advice was that time should be taken to grant these detachments a few hours of rest, so that they might go out again and occupy points of vantage along the colonel's intended route. Captain Debienne, in charge of transportation for the region, who was the member of the party best informed on prevailing conditions, shared this opinion. But, probably unwilling to have it believed that he was overcareful of his own safety, he had not protested strongly.

Colonel Clavery was impatient and scoffed at their fears. He pointed out that the region had been peaceful for more than two years. The last casualty that had attracted serious notice had been Lieutenant Emil, slain by raiders near Bou-Denib. And he had been killed across the Algero-Moroccan border, much closer to Tafilalet than the party would pass.

Tafilalet—one heard overmuch of the place, it was mentioned with too great awe. It was probably true that there were bands from Tafilalet roaming between Beni-Abbès and Colomb-Béchar, but when had there not been such bands in the Sahara? How far would one travel in the desert if one permitted such rumors to prevent or even delay a journey?

Was the picketing of the trails anything more than an exaggerated precaution which perhaps flattered the enemy needlessly?

Clavery conceded that the inhabitants of the Tafilalet oases were tireless, valiant men, gaunt Arabs and Berbers who knew few limits to their daring. They had ejected the French forces which had temporarily occupied their homes in 1918, had cut down a mounted company of the Foreign Legion while achieving this.



BUT MUCH time had elapsed since. The men of Tafilalet might not be educated in the European sense, but they knew that France would exact a ruthless vengeance for harm done an important official such as Clavery. They knew that there were planes at Colomb-Béchar and Bou-Denib, flying machines which could reach their villages in a few hours and rain death from the sky. They must have heard of the air raids in the Riff and against the rebels of the Mid-Atlas. Therefore, admitting that they were well informed and knew of the colonel's presence on the trail, that they were aware that he was not well protected, they would not attack. And Clavery ordered the departure for Colomb-Béchar.

Sergeant Etienne probably approved of this, for he had the sense of power that motorized vehicles give men in the Sahara more than elsewhere. For nowhere is the contrast between the old and the new so sharp. Within the experience of men still young enough to be in active service, this trip between Beni-Abbès and Colomb-Béchar would have consumed several days of travel by camel, entailed many hardships. Now all that was necessary was to step on the starter and shift gears. In a few hours they would be in Béchar.

The trail narrowed, choked between high cliffs. The car was entering the ravine cleaving the range of hills known as the Jebel Arlal. This gully, until it emerged into the open again through the Pass of Megsem Hetlada, formed an ideal emplacement for ambush. This was so widely known that until a few hours before the crests of these hills had been occupied by native auxiliaries, and that a little fortified post had been constructed near the first water hole, at Menouarar, seventeen kilometers north.

"Dirty spot," Sergeant Etienne grumbled.

It would have been comforting to behold up there the blue cloaks of the friendly tribesmen. But it was a matter

of a very few minutes before the truck would be clear of the ravine, rolling toward the north with few dangerous passes remaining. The car kept on.

Then, halfway through the gully, something happened to the machine. Very probably, a tire burst—the changes in temperature, the rough roads made such accidents unavoidable. Legionnaire Decaud left the wheel, found a jack. Sergeant Etienne remained in the front seat, while the negro soldier in the rear rose, ready to help.

Jack in hand, Legionnaire Decaud left the car, went to the front of the truck; he crouched to set the jack in place to raise the machine. The others watched him, grinning, for the Legionnaire cannot have failed to swear at this latest breakdown, following several others.

Suddenly he uttered a cry of pain, his right hand dropped the jack and jerked to his knee. At the same moment, many bullets whistled close to the two others. Etienne reached for his carbine, while the negro soldier leaped out.

Legionnaire Decaud was struck a second time, in the chest, and collapsed. The negro saw Sergeant Etienne jump from the car in his turn and raced toward the slopes. The ravine was now alive with the whine of bullets, echoed with the familiar detonations of the Gras rifles in the hands of the assailants.

Tack-ho! Tack-ho! Tack-ho!

Sergeant Etienne was hit in the right arm, but carried on. He could not remain with the car, could not stand in the open. But he never reached cover. A raider rose from behind a nearby rock, aimed at the Frenchman at point-blank range, pressed the trigger. Etienne fell, dead.

Other raiders pounced on the negro soldier, disarmed him, struck him, but spared his life. Being black, he represented property, money. The Moroccans poured down the slopes, like insects darting from beneath rocks. They were of all ages, some gray bearded, others mere youths, but all were fierce, resolute warriors, scantily clad in ragged garments,

with soiled rags wound about their foreheads.

They were patriots fighting for their home land, they were Moslems slaying Christians, but they were first and foremost workmen plying their chosen trade—pillage. Their race had always lived on loot, raiding had always been the major industry of their people. They shouted with joy as they found the modern carbines of the truck's defenders, then swarmed on the machine, stripping it of all it contained.

For thirty minutes, they howled and danced, quarreled over booty, until the imminent arrival of the second car sent them scurrying to cover, after setting fire to the truck.

The second car was a six-wheeled Renault, a type of machine designed for Saharan travel. Its occupants were Colonel Clavery, his chief-of-staff, Captain Pasquet, a French sergeant, Jost, who was going north on leave, and Legionnaire Klotz, who was driving the car.

They had not heard the detonations or the shrill scream of the bullets, for they had been several miles away at the time of the first attack.

Legionnaire Klotz stepped on the gas. Perhaps he had not realized immediately that there had been an ambush and simply thought his comrades had met with an accident; or it may be that he hoped to speed through by surprise and reach safety.

Tack-hol Tack-hol Tack-hol

The raiders opened fire for the second time. At short range they are all deadly marksmen. Leads pattered against the chassis, bullets pierced the radiator and smacked into the motor. Legionnaire Klotz soon realized that he and his companions would be riddled before they were out of range. There was nothing to do save take cover and fight off the assailants.

He brought the six-wheeled Renault to a halt two hundred yards from the blazing truck.

Tack-hol



THE FRENCH soldiers grasped their carbines and tried to return the murderous fire poured into them. But, as had the others before them, they soon found out that they had no chance if they remained in the car, that temporary safety lay behind rocks.

The raiders concentrated their fire on the officers, easily recognized by their cloaks. Captain Pasquet dropped first, before he had covered a hundred yards. A Gras bullet, a lead slug the size of the first joint of a man's finger, pierced his groin. He was mortally wounded. Colonel Clavery, agile as a young man, kept on, until another Gras missile hit him in the abdomen. Before he could drop another bullet tore through his chest.

Colonel Clavery, commander of the territory, was dead. The odds had been too great against the valiant soldier. This was the death he would have selected—by enemies' bullets.

Sergeant Jost and Legionnaire Klotz were still running. The sharpshooters turned their full attention to them. Jost was hit in the upper arm, suffering a horrible wound that smashed the bones. As for Legionnaire Klotz, the chance of flight tumbled him into a deep hole. His foes saw his limp fall, believed him dead. Jost dropped his carbine, plunged headlong behind a boulder, crawled away rapidly.

Raiders came forward to pick up the discarded carbines—for the moment they did not pursue the two survivors, but ran back to join the others who were pillaging the car. The cushions were torn up, boxes ripped open, and the looters howled with joy. They were still occupied when the third car entered the pass.

It was another six-wheeled Renault. The spot had been created for an ambush; the high rocks had muffled all sounds; and the occupants had heard neither shots, bullets nor screams. All they beheld at first was a swirling mass of cloaks and turbans surrounding their leader's car. For an instant they believed that it was a friendly crowd from

a nearby tribe come to greet the colonel.

The men in the car were Captain Debienne, Cavalry Sergeant Clavery, nineteen year old son of the colonel, who as fortune would have it, was on leave from his regiment and had accompanied his father on the tour of inspection, Foreign Legion Sergeant Schweicher, Military Mechanic Campillo, Legionnaire Roth, and Lorgeryl, a French private going on leave.

Their first knowledge that all was not well came when the raiders scattered and sought cover. The driver brought the car to a halt two hundred and fifty yards short of the colonel's car.

Tack-ho! Tack-ho! Tack-ho!

For the third time the raiders had opened fire.

The men in the machine were searching for weapons fit to use. Presumably all soldiers traveling in the Sahara must be armed. As a matter of fact, long security had made men careless. The armorer at Beni-Abbès, when asked for carbines, had grumbled about "people who are scared of their own shadow" and consented to part with a couple of very old rifles, which turned out to be unfit for use.

Meanwhile a blast of lead struck the car.

Young Clavery had a Lebel carbine ready to use. He had seen his father's motionless body and knew the worst. Despair gave him strength. He leaped out, firing as he moved, and that first shot dropped one of the fleeing raiders. Legionnaire Roth had a carbine, and opened fire also.

But it was Sergeant Clavery who became the soul of the defense. He had never been under fire before. But some men need no lesson. His shots were aimed calmly, with deliberation, and took effect. Within a few seconds, those of the raiders who had tried to make a stand from behind the car left its precarious shelter and raced headlong for the rocks. Young Clavery's carbine rattled as they ran; one or two stumbled, but all reached cover. Then the vicinity of the

looted machine was deserted, the floor of the ravine empty save for the bodies of the fallen.

"Cartridges," Clavery called grimly.

There was no immediate answer. While he had been firing, those in the car had suffered. Captain Debienne had been hit in the flank and in the thigh. Sergeant Schweicher had caught five slugs for his share; two more had pierced his cloak. Mechanic Campillo was down, too, wounded in the hip.

"Cartridges!"

Again, a frantic search took place. No trouble had been expected, for the trails were reputed secure and the colonel had been so confident. Where were the cartridges? Sergeant Schweicher recalled that there were packages of them under the front seat, and ordered the unwounded men to shift Captain Debienne. He found the ammunition, and although every move was a torture, he contrived to throw cartridges to Clavery.



THE RAIDERS were firing constantly upon the huddled men in the car, upon Clavery and the Legionnaire outside. There could be no thought of escape. And had there been, these men would not have availed themselves of it. The bodies of the fallen could not be abandoned. To bring them to the third car, the unwounded survivors, Roth and Lorgeryl, would have to expose themselves, and would certainly be shot down. Yet the bodies *could not* be left, to be stripped and mutilated.

A grim warning was before their eyes. Several hundred yards away but easily discerned under the strong light was the corpse of Sergeant Etienne. Some of the raiders had preferred this easy prey to the competition for loot near the cars. The body was half nude already, and the limbs were sprawled grotesquely. They had come too late to prevent this insult to their comrade, but could not leave the colonel or Captain Pasquet to suffer a like treatment.

So in that circle of stone hemmed by

rock walls, a long struggle started.

A son was fighting to keep his father's body from desecration. He was scarcely more than a schoolboy, had come on this trip joyously, as to an excursion, and tragedy had overtaken him. He was racked by grief. His youth, his inexperience, the dire loss so fresh in mind, nerve shock, all might have excused him for a moment's weakness.

Perhaps if Captain Debiegne or Sergeant Schweicher, his senior in ranking, had been physically able to take command, young Clavery might have yielded to personal grief. But he was before all else a soldier, the unwounded officer of the party. The responsibility rested upon him. So his brain remained clear, his nerves steady. From his lips came no word of doubt, no word of despair—and not a single rash order.

For if he had a duty as a son, it was subordinated to his duty as a chief. There was no panic in him, nothing to urge foolhardiness, not even the mistaken courage of the fatal sortie forward.

"Cartridges—!"

"*Tack-ho! Tack-ho!*" the sinister voices of the Gras rifles replied. Their messages sang nearer. The combat went on. How many men were there before Clavery? Twenty or thirty, by various estimates. And he fought them, almost single handed.

An hour passed.

"Night's coming," said some one.

Night was coming, night which would leave them shorn of all protection. Desert men were out in front; night prowlers, for it was part of their business to know how to creep noiselessly upon wary foes. They knew the principles of night approach as a telegraph operator knows the Morse code, as a sea captain knows the stars. Night was coming, and with night would come the raiders, with knives in their hands.

The men in the car who possessed pistols had the choice between using them for a last defense when the time came, or to take the less glorious course, for cutting short an unpleasant adventure.

Defiantly the detonations of young Clavery's carbine slapped out into the gathering dusk. He could not fear, he could not die. His father's body must not be touched; he was responsible for it to France, to his family, to his valiant mother in distant Ain-Seffra, wife of a soldier, mother of a soldier.

Widow of a soldier . . .

Tack-ho! Tack-ho!

Night falls quickly in the Sahara. The spurts of fire from the Gras rifles edged the crests. Clavery fired at the flashes, doggedly. He was doing his job.

Darkness.

The gully was velvety black, but the sky stretched above the rim of the cliffs, silken and sprinkled with stars. The wind rustled, moaned, howled.

"They're coming," a voice whispered.

Young Clavery's carbine spat out steadily. A few seconds of breathless waiting—and nothing happened. In the car the suffering men huddled closer.

"Water—water—give me water!"

It was Captain Debiegne calling. He had not pleaded for water when conscious, for he knew that there was no more water. But pain and fever had robbed him of pride. He was delirious.

"For God's sake, fellows, water—just a little water—"

"No water left, Captain!"

"I've treated you square, lads, always. I've tried to treat you right. Why do you hold out on me? Why do you hate me, lads? I can hear it gurgling when you drink—all of you! Please, for God's sake!"

Cold wrapped the desert.

The fiery heat of the sun had left the ground swiftly, and the season was asserting itself, for it was December; Winter in the Sahara as elsewhere. The wounded shivered in the car; their teeth clicked with a perceptible sound.

Young Clavery was on guard, responsible for the detachment—his detachment, now. It was cold for him also; his hands stiffened on the carbine.

Tack-ho!

He could not be cold. He should

dered the gun and answered the shot.

"They're coming—!"

Again the breathless wait, and again nothing happened. But they were all certain that the raiders would come before morning. It was the end for them all. The minutes passed.

"Water, lads, for God's sake—"

"They're coming!"

"Water, water, water—"

Tack-ho!

Time passed.



IN THE CAR Sergeant Schweicher was restless. Danger was not new to him, neither was suffering, his own or that of others. He had seen the war hospitals as a boy. Then he had served in the German Imperial Navy, cruised the Baltic and the North Seas.

Long ago he had known moments of despair. He had seen the fleet of his country steam out with battle colors painted on the tall stacks; he had beheld the massive vessels limp home from Jutland. He had served as a volunteer against the Bolsheviks and later with the German police. He had nine years of Foreign Legion as an African background, eight of those years in the desert. He was six feet tall, one hundred and eighty pounds in weight, and barely thirty-one.

Adventure? Danger? In the Foreign Legion he was a wireless specialist. He had been operator at Tabelbala on the fringe of the Raouy dunes. The past few years he had gone from outpost to outpost, installing sets, traveling over the Sahara, by motor car when possible, more often atop a camel. On one of these trips he had almost died of thirst, had been picked up unconscious by friendly natives and revived.

Finding himself now in a bullet ridden car, wounded and about to die, he merely murmured—

"Life must end somewhere."

He knew himself to be severely wounded, probably mortally. Bullets had pierced his groin, his thighs. He had a tear on one shoulder. He was willing to

die, but he craved a last smoke. He fumbled under the great cloak wrapped around him, the *burnous* of the Saharan, searched his pockets and found matches and a crushed, moist package of cigarettes.

All seemed quiet outside, but he knew he must not show a light in the open. To give the raiders a target might mean injury to a comrade. He no longer cared for himself, but he had a duty to others. Yet a hole more or less would not matter, and he must smoke.

He rested for a while, to recover from the faintness brought on by his movements. Nearby, Sergeant Clavery, who was lucky to have an efficient weapon, fired at regular intervals.

"Water—water—for God's sake—"

"Wish he'd shut up," some one said.

"Doesn't know he's doing it—"

Schweicher drew the cloak over his head, crouched, and a stabbing ache seemed to melt his middle. But the pain passed. The first match would not light, the second smoldered. Under the hood of thick cloth the acrid stench of phosphorus made the Legionnaire cough. The matches seemed to be wet. He understood and smiled. But he did not give up. Patiently he dried a match on cloth, and it lighted. The cigaret he held was limp, sputtered, but he could inhale smoke—smoke that tasted flat, but tobacco smoke.

He had a sensation of extreme comfort, of exquisite well being.

"They're coming—"

"All right—tell them I'm out!"

The cigaret was finished.

Schweicher's head emerged from the cloak. The ravine was black as the pit, the stars remote, cold and hard as diamonds. A great silence had settled about them, more menacing than sounds. From time to time Sergeant Clavery stirred, and the butt plate of his carbine rasped against the stone.

Had the raiders left, were they biding their time, or were they crawling nearer? Anxious questions, which no one dared voice aloud. Schweicher did not wonder long, but wrapped his head in the cloak and smoked another cigaret.

"He'll die," one of the privates said.

He was speaking of Captain Debienne, who was moaning like a very small child alone in a dark room. It was certain that Captain Debienne would die, but the question now was not who would die but who could hope to live. Clavery's carbine cracked inquiringly, questioning an answer. But the orange spurt of flame drew no reply from the crests.

Had they left? Were they waiting? Were they crawling?

The three questions turned around their heads endlessly, as if seeking an escape. Were they coming with their curved knives? They must know—and a match flared invitingly.

No shot. No sound.

The hours dragged wearily, slid to an end, and new seconds strung out into minutes, minutes into another hour. The night was passing like a waking nightmare.

"Water—water—water—"

The word was barely audible, but all were thirsty now, and the repetition of that one word tolling like a funeral gong drove them mad. Hours of shivering, of anxiety. They seemed alone under the stars, alone but for the dead.

Sunlight, the sun! They wanted sunlight on their bodies. It might mean the end, but they wished only to be warm again, to die warm, to die seeing, with the terrors of the black night wiped away.

Some mumbled prayers under their breath, others cursed. But all hoped. And as if their hope had compelled Fate, the sky suddenly filled with a thick, vague grayness. Silhouettes could be distinguished, of huddled men in a car, stirring uneasily. And the crests were revealed, formidable and vague: there was no movement up there. No shot came—nothing.

Light came—the sun!

Young Clavery still held the carbine, but his vigil was coming to an end, his strange, unforgettable wake was finished. In the car Sergeant Schweicher looked down at the package of cigarets, mottled with dark, drying flakes. His long,

strong fingers straightened out one of the smirched cylinders, and he smoked tobacco that tasted of his own blood.



A NATIVE courier from Taghit had heard the shots, seen the attack from a distance. He reached the outpost of Menouarar late in the evening of December 8th. The sergeant in command, Pacou, could not leave his post, but he showed great initiative. While he sent news to Colomb-Béchar, he dispatched half of the native mounted auxiliaries at his disposal to the scene.

These riders reached the cars too late to engage the assailants. Nothing could be seen of the raiders, save one body, that of the first man dropped by Sergeant Clavery. The body of Etienne, too far to have been protected by the threat of the young man's fire, had been completely stripped and mutilated. But the dead of the second machine were untouched. Jost and Klotz appeared.

The bodies of the fallen were gathered near the third car. Before long, a plane appeared, flying low because of the thick fog. It had come from Colomb-Béchar, where the runners from Menouarar had arrived at five in the morning and spread the alarm. The cloaks of the dead officers were spread wide on the soil. The plane dipped in token of understanding and disappeared toward the north, to take back the first official news that the three officers with the party had fallen.

Not long after, the military cars from Colomb-Béchar arrived. Dead and wounded were taken back to the town at the head of the rail. Captain Debienne recovered sufficiently to speak a few words to his wife before dying.

The population of Béchar turned out in an impressive funeral ceremony on December 11th. The victims of the ambush in the Jebel Arlal were buried together in a corner of the cemetery. The gravely wounded were sent to the hospital.

Of the crew of the first car, only the negro survived. Sold as a slave by the raiders, to an Arab of Tafilalet, he turned

up at Colomb-Béchar late in the summer of 1929. He saw nothing startling in his escape, crossing the waterless stretch between Tafilalet and the French posts.

"Just walked away the first chance I had," he said, "split the breeze, you know. I was thirsty, tired, but I kept on going, and here I am. That's all."

Of the survivors of the second car, Legionnaire Klotz returned to duty. Sergeant Jost was so badly wounded that his arm had to be amputated at the shoulder. The wounds inflicted by Gras rifles are hard to heal, particularly when the marksman has taken care to chew the bullet a bit. When last heard of by his Saharan friends, Jost was entering the Val de Grâce Hospital in Paris, for another operation, an operation to end operations.

The unwounded survivors of the third car went on leave. Mechanic Campillo, treated in Colomb-Béchar, soon returned to duty, and later distinguished himself during the pursuit of the raiders who ambushed a section of the Foreign Legion's mounted company at Jehani. Sergeant Schweicher remained in the Oran Hospital for more than a year. His left leg was amputated at the hip. He is now in Algiers, and plans to go back to the desert to start a small business. Various decorations were distributed to the survivors.

The band of raiders was identified as being Ait Hammous, from the tribe living near Tafilalet. This was ascertained and made official when the body of the man killed by young Clavery was recognized. It is doubtful that they were punished. They had escaped the cordon of troops sent out from the outposts upon wireless orders, breaking through north of Abadla, killing two men of the group sent out from that post. A trio of planes from Colomb-Béchar sighted raiders on the trail near the Wed Guir, and turned machine guns loose on them without much effect.

The "Official Journal" of the French Republic announced the promotion of Clavery to general in the issue of De-

cember 12th, 1928, to take effect from the 7th of December. That was the day preceding the officer's death, consequently he bore that title in all official documents concerning the affair.

Meanwhile, the deputies and senators of the French Legislative Chambers questioned the Cabinet. Why, when French peace presumably reigned in the Sahara, had three French officers been killed? Who was to blame?

Premier Raymond Poincaré made a speech in which he stated that the chief fault rested with the victims, who had disregarded regulations enacted in December, 1926, ordering that motor cars traveling in the desert keep together, and that the trails should be protected by security forces. He was partially right.

Captains Pasquet and Debieenne obeyed orders. And General Clavery was not altogether to blame. A man in his position had an example to give—and he elected to show daring. Luck went against him and he fell. But it is probable that he was aware of the danger and that he chanced death rather than give absolute evidence that the land he ruled, after nearly thirty years of French occupation, was unsafe for its commander. Had he waited until detachments were sent back on the trails, he would have been accused of timidity.

His death was not useless. It reminded others that despite motor cars and airplanes, the desert remained the desert, still killed off the unwary.

A few months after the ambush Sergeant Clavery was promoted and decorated. The impressive ceremony took place within the pass, at the exact spot where the father had fallen. The decorations were bestowed by the minister of colonies, in the presence of Marshal Franchet-d'Esperey—and of the armored cars, the Spahis and the mounted company of the Foreign Legion. For ample proof had been given that the raiders were not respectful of important personalities, and no chance was offered them to add to their list a general, a cabinet minister and a marshal of France at a stroke.

A Story of Old Whaling Days



As CAP'N BUCKMINSTER TELLS IT

By FREDERICK HOPKINS

IT WAS some years ago. We'd sailed out of Frisco in the month of March for a short v'yage. My ship was the *Pursuer*, an auxiliary steam whaler, built and outfitted for Arctic bowhead whalin' and carrying a crew of thirty-five.

We touched first at the Ladrone Islands, taking on fruit and pigs, then went into the Yellow Sea for three weeks, where we got two right whales. Then out of the Yellow Sea and across the North Pacific.

Gales caught us as we neared Bering Sea. At the Aleutian Islands we had a six-day wait, but we beat through the

old Amoughta Pass at last. I stuck the *Pursuer's* nose into the ice pack and we pushed through the straits in the northerly drift, one of the first of the fleet to reach the Arctic.

So here we were t'wards the end of June, floating on the swell off Point Hope, waiting for a day's trading with the natives before settin' off to the east'ard for Point Barrow. Far astern of us we could see the shores and hills of Siberia. Green water was tossing all around, the northerly ice pack was only a white horizon line far to loo'ard, and to starboard lay the Alaskan shore half a mile away, showing

green and pink with grass and flowers.

Summer was almost here. On the north'ard drifting ice cakes lay walrus and hair seal, forerunners of the whale. And along the sandy shore of Point Hope moved the Eskimos, putting out their kyaks, paddling to the *Pursuer*, laughing and jabbering, holding up with one free hand the furs they had for sale, making fast their kyaks and swarming up the ladder, their bundles under their arms.

My crew were loafing along the star-board rail, watching the Eskimos as they paddled out and climbed aboard. As some of 'em struck the deck up come the cook with the harness cask full of hard ship bread and dumped it down. Nuff said! Those Eskimos were quick eaters. They plumped themselves down beside the hardtack, helped themselves and ate with consid'able noise but without wastin' any time in words.

When they'd finally disposed of the hardtack they got up and walked about among the crew, selling their furs. These Eskimos are very smart with the needle, so the trading was brisk.

I had a third mate, Howie Hansen, a bright young feller. He was standing by the rail with Jokeen Cunha, one of the boat steerers, when along comes a fat little Eskimo man with his arms full of furs.

"You buy furs?" said the fat Eskimo. "Very good furs."

And so they were. These Masinker Eskimos are well known. There ain't any better sealskin boots than they turn out. Howie was beginning to look them over.

"Look here, Jokeen," he says. "Here's your chance to buy some boots."

"I got boots enough," says Jokeen. "I might buy a deerskin shirt."

"Deerskin shirt," says the fat little Eskimo. "She got 'em shirt, boots. Lo-al-la!"

A girl came runnin' up—an Eskimo girl of seventeen or so—very pretty, for an Eskimo. Fairly tall, with black eyes, a nose not so awful flat, and hair falling down in front in two long braids. She

wore sealskin boots, a squirrel skin shirt with a hood and a jumper of hair seal with black dogskin collar. In that outfit she'd pass for a pretty girl most anywhere. So Howie seemed to think.

"Hello, girlie," he says.

She'd been one of the last to climb on board. Both her hands were full of hard biscuit and under one arm was a sizeable bundle of furs. She was laughing as she tried to prevent the ship bread from sliding down.

"Got your arms full, have you, girlie?" says Howie. "Here, let me help you." And he took the bundle of furs from under her arm. "Now you can do something with that ship bread."

She laughed, showing her white teeth. And raising her hands, she dropped all the ship bread, first from one hand, then from the other, down the neck opening of her squirrel skin shirt. Then she give her body a shake and laughed again.

"Better now, ain't it?" says Howie.

She held out an empty hand.

"Tobac?"

"Tobac?" repeats Howie. "What?"

"Sure! Tobac!"

Howie reached down into his hip pocket, brought out his plug of Mechanic's Delight and handed it to her. She bit off a big chaw and passed it back.

"Say!" says Howie. "You're welcome, only don't spit on the deck."

But he didn't need to worry. She didn't spit on the deck, or anywhere else. It was all part of the game.

Howie took her bundle and began to open it.

"What you got here?"

It was boots, mostly—sealskin boots, very good. Howie looked 'em over.

"Did you make 'em all by yourself?"

"Sure!" She laughed.

"And did you chew all them boots?"

"Sure!"

"Then I'll certainly have to buy a pair. What's your name?"

"Loalla." With her mouth wide open. "Lo - al - la."

She laughed at him as he tried to imitate her.

"Well, Loalla, my name's Howie Hansen. Can you say Howie?"

"Howie!"

"That's right, only don't open your mouth so wide. How about them boots?"

She took one of the boots in her hand, squeezed the top close and blew into it. The boot stayed that way, full of air.

"All right," says Howie. "I'll take all the boots you got. What are you, Loalla? Nakoorook?"

She shook her head.

"No, Masinker."

"But he's a Nakoorook, ain't he?" asks Howie. "He's got the top of his head shaved."

To be sure, the little fat Eskimo man had the crown of his head shaved in one round spot. You couldn't help but notice it.

"Yes," says the little Eskimo. "I am Enak of the Nakoorook. I speak English very good. I chase whale. Cap'n Buck, he know me."

Which was perfectly true. I knew him well. He was one of their rich men. Had an old whaleboat he'd traded for somewhere, used to chase whales. I'd got considerable oil and bone from him, off and on.

"I s'pose Enak's your beau," Howie says. "Ain't he, Loalla?"

"No," says she, laughin' very hard. "No, no!" And she looks at the shaved spot on the top of the little Eskimo's head.

"Why," says Howie, "don't you like for a man to shave the top of his head? What do you do it for, Enak? There ain't any reason for it, is there? Just a custom."

"No," answers the little Eskimo, very serious. "There is a reason. The Nakoorooks are wise. They do not wish that a devil shall reach his arm up from the water and seize a Nakoorook by the hair and drag him from his kyak down to the bottom of the ocean. So we shave the head."

Howie thought it over.

"Then why don't the devils get the Masinkers? The Masinkers don't shave their heads, far as I know."

"They do get them," answers the Eski-

mo, very prompt. "If a Masinker drowns it is probably a devil that has done it."



SO THEY talked. When I come up to 'em a while later Howie and the girl were sitting together for'ard by the capstan. He'd bought her whole stock in trade, three pairs of sealskin boots and a deer-skin coat with mittens. Jokeen had a fawn skin shirt with a hood. For 'em they'd traded a miscellaneous assortment of colored handkerchiefs, perfumery, plug tobacco and canned soup and everybody was satisfied.

I stopped beside 'em. Howie was just taking out of his pocket, as a special treat, a half pound of hard candy in a paper bag. Loalla took the bag, picked out a large piece of candy with bright stripes and put it in her mouth. There it stayed while she chewed, the candy in one side of her mouth, the tobacco in the other.

"Good morning," I says. "Having a good time?"

She laughed.

"If she ain't, I am," says Howie.

"Then don't hurry," I says. "There's the rest of the day before you. We'll lie off here all day."

"It'll be a short day, Cap," says Howie. "I could stand it here till tomorrow."

I had to smile.

"You know better, Howie. We haven't anchorage and we haven't sea room. There's danger here."

"So they say," says Howie. "But I could never see it."

"Howie," I says, "many's the good ship has come to grief right where we're lying. Disappeared and never heard from! The last was the whaling bark *Arctic Bird*, abandoned by her crew and lost last Autumn going out of the ocean, full of oil and bone. Nobody knows what's become of her."

"I remember," says Howie. "Cap'n Slater commanded her. I've spoken with him. He stuck to his ship, they say. I've seen the *Arctic Bird*."

"Don't forget her. The sooner we're at Point Barrow, the better. Cheer up,

little girl. You'll see us in the Fall as we go out."

I walked away, leaving 'em there. And there they sot all day, talking, or trying to talk, for Loalla knew just a few words of English and Howie a little bit of Eskimo. But they didn't seem to mind; they got along. About the middle of the afternoon I give the word to leave.

With a good deal of difficulty we persuaded our visitors to go, and finally they swarmed down the ladder, fixed themselves in their kyaks, pulled the aprons over their laps and paddled off.

Loalla went last of all, her plump figure looking all the plumper as she climbed over the rail and crawled down, step by step.

Howie leaned on the rail to see her black eyes looking up at him.

"You know, Loalla!" he called. "All right, now! Don't forget!"

She smiled up at him while she chewed her candy and tobacco.

"All right, Howie! Sure! All right!"



SUMMER passed almost before we knew it. Our three-month season of whaling with

Point Barrow as a base was ending. We'd sailed as far to the east'ard as Cape Dalhousie and back again, and now the fleet was cruising to the west, hugging the edge of the ice pack, hunting the whales through the open leads. Cold gales were blowing from the north and patches of young ice were everywhere. The ocean was fast freezing over.

'Twas a dull afternoon 'long the first of October and all five of our boats were out. Howie's boat—he headed it as third mate—was sailing up a long lead that opened through the ice field. The water lane was very smooth, the face of the ice field bubbly and shiny, and everywhere the ice a-scrunching and a-cracking.

All of a sudden there was a tremendous splashing in the lead. Penguins jumped out like a row of ten pins. Then came a big bowhead whale thrashing through the lead with a wave spreading out behind him and a pack of black and white killers

worrying him, biting and snapping at his head.

Howie stands up in the stern of the boat.

"Follow him, Jokeen," he says. "Put me on the floe. If he comes back I'll give him a dart."

The boat was backed against the floe and Howie stepped up on the ice, taking with him a harpoon and a tub of line. The whale and killers swept on up the lane, the whale-boat started her motor and a wave rolled up to the edge of the floe and over it, filling the tub and mounting to the ankles of Howie's sealskin boots. Howie tipped the tub to empty it of water, then stood up and stared after the whale.

But a fog was shutting down. It came all at once, rolling over him in a cloud. The whale and the boat were far out of sight, the sound of 'em was faint. The water lane was invisible. Howie couldn't even see his sealskin boots.

Through the fog the horn of the *Pursuer* began to sound. The ship was calling back her boats. The fog made the sound as clear as if the ship 'd been close by.

Underneath Howie's feet the ice was beginning to rock. In long waves it rose and fell. With short pops it cracked and broke across. The ice floe was moving. The tides had caught it.

The foghorn of the *Pursuer* was sounding fainter. The motion of the ice was increasing. The fog pressed down on Howie's eyes like a wet sponge. Finally the distant toots of the horn ceased altogether and Howie stood wrapped in fog, alone on the rocking floe, in silence except for the splashing of the water and the snapping of the ice.



NOW, as it 'pears, this Eskimo girl was watching out for our ship. Which wasn't so foolish when you come to think of it.

She knew as well as anybody when the fleet was due to sail out of the ocean. And the weather'd tell her if we'd be early or late. The *Pursuer* could be seen a long ways off. Specially if we were tryin' out a whale we'd be very easy to see.

Consequently she'd go out in her kyak mostly every day and paddle round, looking for signs of us. There was still open water along the shore, and Loalla'd put her kyak into every bight and bay and round every headland, so's not to miss whatever there might be.

Finally she come on Howie lyin' on an ice pan. I expect he must have looked pretty much like a seal, huddled on the ice in his furs, the snow drifted over him. Far's anybody could see he might be dead.

But she got to him. Crawled out of her kyak on to the ice pan and rolled him over.

"Howie!" she says.

Howie opened one of his eyes, or tried to, 'nuff to show he was still alive, but he couldn't speak.

Loalla rolled him over and over to the edge of the ice and slid him down carefully inside the kyak. There he lay stretched out, his feet pointed down into the bow of the kyak, his head resting on Loalla's knees, with the watertight flap over him. She grabbed the harpoon and the tub of line and balanced 'em behind her on the kyak. So she paddled away very careful.

A big berg stood at the water's edge on shore not far away, a big grounded berg, high as a ship's masts, with clear water at the base. Back of it, on the side of the slope, was a tent—one of the walrus hide tents the Eskimos live in. Loalla's own tent, it was, where she lived, only the old folks were all away, chasing whales.

Loalla paddled to the shore, slid up easy on the frozen sand, stepped out and tipped Howie out, then dragged him up the slope to the tent, carried him into it and dumped him on the ground. There she took off his furs and rubbed him all over with ice to take out the chill. Then putting him to bed on a big white bear skin, she piled furs on him till he was three skins deep in furs. In a raging fever, out of his head and muttering words that meant nothing, Howie finally closed his eyes and dropped off to troubled sleep.

Sitting down on the ground beside him,

Loalla began to sing—not a regular song, just two or three notes over and over again as she rocked her body or raised her hands and let them fall. Howie stopped his muttering, his face grew easier, and at last he lay quiet, breathing deep. Loalla stopped her song.

So Howie slept through the night, while she watched beside him. Sometimes he'd rouse and ask for water and she'd give him a cup of water melted from glacier ice. Then he'd go to sleep again.

All through the next day he slept. A second night came, bright moonlight, and he still slept. Loalla took off her boots and her fur jumper, laid herself down beside Howie and in a minute was asleep.

T'wards midnight Howie woke, opened his eyes, raised himself on his elbow and listened.

"Loalla!" he whispered.

She roused.

"What you want, Howie?"

"I'm gettin' up, Loalla. Where's my furs?"

"No, Howie, you sick."

"Bring me them furs!"

She got to her feet, brought his shirt and coat and helped him put them on.

"Hand me them boots!"

She brought 'em—one of the pairs she'd made.

"What for you want 'em, Howie?"

"I hear a whale breathing."

"What you goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' to find that whale."

"You sick, Howie!"

"I ain't sick now. I hear a bowhead whalé."

Without more words she helped him up, then put on her boots and jumper and followed him out into the moonlight. To be sure, somewhere not far off there was a sleeping whale. They could hear it breathe, very plain, a regular, deep breath, with a snort now and then.

"The sound comes from the berg," says Howie. "Come. We'll take a look."

"No," says Loalla. "No, Howie. The berg is a devil house. There is a *toonook* in it."

"What if there is?" says Howie. "He can't hurt us. Come on."

So they walks down to the berg and round on the ocean side, with Loalla hanging on to Howie's hand and holding back. And when they come to get round they see what it is. There's a big hole in the berg, with six foot of water in the hole and a big bowhead whale a-sleeping in the water. He must have swum in at high tide, and now when the tide is low he can't get out. So he goes to sleep, and it's him they heard, breathing as he lies asleep in this hole in the berg that the ocean has bored.

"There's a few thousand dollars for you and me, Loalla," says Howie, "if we could only collect it."

The bowhead stirred and give a slap with his flukes.

"He hears something," says Howie. "I hear it too. It's another bowhead, singing, way, way off. *Hoo-oo-oo!* Do you hear it, Loalla?"

"Sure, I hear it."

The bowhead give another slap with his flukes.

"Slap away," says Howie. "You can't get out unless you bust the berg."

The bowhead was waking up. His flukes were coming down not in the water, but on hard ice. He was scared. He twisted his body back and forth and thrashed with his flukes till the spray flew and the berg trembled. But he couldn't get away.

Loalla was scared.

"Oh!" she says. "The whale is a *toonook*."

"No, it ain't," says Howie. "But it sure can give a hard slap. Be careful, Loalla."

For the whale was thrashing worse than ever. His flukes went up and down like a pile driver. The berg was weakening. Loalla and Howie felt it giving way. At last it split! All the way through, even to the rocks and sand. The whale give another slap, dived under the floe, and it was goodbye, whale. But there where it had been, on the bottom in the shore ice, was—what?

A ship! Heeled over on her starboard side, with masts and spars and sails complete. Flattened some by the weight of ice on it, but a ship, and a good ship! Full with a cargo of oil and bone that had held her safe and prevented the ice from smashing in her sides. Her canvas torn, her rigging snapped and broken, but yet a ship!

As she swung up on the wave that followed the splitting of the berg, Howie read her name and repeated it aloud:

"*Arctic Bird*, San Francisco."

The wave retreated and the ship fell away. Another wave and she swung back to port. With rigging slatting, she heeled till the tips of her yards touched the ice in front of Howie and Loalla.

And as she heeled, they saw a man standing on her deck by the starboard rail, a man of middle age, with graying hair and eyes fixed and unseeing. Jumping as the ship listed, the man slid across the deck to the port rail among the buckets and the ropes. And there, six feet away, out of a face white as chalk, from out a dead man's eyes, he stared full at Howie and Loalla.

"*Toonook! Toonook!*" screamed Loalla.

"It's all right, Loalla," says Howie, as the ship fell away. "Don't be scared. It's the *Arctic Bird*. He ain't a *toonook*, he's Cap'n Slater. The ship was wrecked, Loalla. Wrecked and we found her. We've got possession now! The ship is ours! We'll be rich, you and me, Loalla! We'll be rich."



FOR two days the *Pursuer's* boats had been hunting Howie all over the ice and 'long the shore, and here he was the third day waiting for us when we hove-to off Point Hope.

First thing I done, I went ashore in the jollyboat to where Howie was waiting down on the Point 'long with Loalla and the Eskimos. And we all walked along the beach over the shore ice till we'd got to where the old *Arctic Bird* laid, some miles away. She'd listed again and was lying on her side, but her masts and

standing riggin' showed very plain.

We made a thorough examination of her, Howie and me, not forgetting to take care, decently 's we could, of Cap'n Slater. Then back to the Point, and I took Howie with me out to the *Pursuer* and down into the cabin.

"Now, Howie," I says, "you're a kind of a castaway, ain't you? But I guess you're glad of it. You lost a whale, but you'll have money coming to you another way."

"To Loalla and me," Howie says.

"Why, sure," I answered him. "To her and you. Now what about it? Let's have it understood before we go any further."

"How much oil and bone do you cal'late she stows?" says Howie.

"I should judge," I told him, "that the *Arctic Bird* holds about eighteen hundred barrels of oil and fifteen thousand pounds of bone. Say from seventy-five thousand to a hundred thousand dollars in the port of San Francisco. She's in fair condition. The ground ice held her tight and the berg covered her up, so she hasn't pounded. The cargo has shifted, but she seems to be full, as was reported."

"How'll you get her to Frisco, Cap? What next?"

"What next? Why, first we'll chop her out. Then we'll heave her up, patch her, re-stow her cargo and put men enough aboard to run the pumps and I guess we can work her round into Kotzebue Sound."

"Will that help us?" says Howie. "It's two thousand miles from Kotzebue Sound to Frisco."

"Wait!" I says. "When we've worked her in back of Chamiss Island, where the rake of the wind isn't so strong, we'll land everything, make a raft out of her spars, anchor it with her bow anchors and weight it with casks of water. Then we'll heave her down, make repairs, re-stow again, and you can take her to Frisco. I'll put you in command."

Howie clucked with his tongue.

"About Loalla, Cap," he says. "Ain't it best she would go along with us?"

I looked at him hard.

"What you gettin' at, Howie?"

"There's some reasons why she should go with us, Cap. If there was something she would have to sign. Also any money for her to collect. Her folks don't care where she goes."

"Well?" I says.

"Of course," he goes on, "we'd expect to be married. We've fixed all that. P'r'aps you could perform the ceremony, Cap."

"P'r'aps I could," I says, "but I won't! What, Howie? How'd you get this crazy idee of marryin' an Eskimo? Ain't you got more sense? I guess your night on the ice kind o' went to your head. The girl don't understand, does she?"

"She understands, all right," says Howie. "It ain't as if she was an ordinary Eskimo. She'll have plenty coming to her. She could go to Frisco with us. It wouldn't take long for her to learn, after she once was there."

"Well, she won't go with me," I says.

"Not in the *Pursuer*!"

"Then I won't go," says Howie. "I'll stay here till next season. I'm satisfied."

"That means you'll desert, don't it?" I says. "Then who'll take you back when the time comes? I won't. And there ain't a cap'n will carry back a man that's a deserter. If that's your idee I won't let you off the ship."

"I guess you'd have hard work stopping me if I started to go," he says.

"I could stop you, Howie," I says to him. "Just think it over now. There ain't much time."

He got up from the chair and walked round the cabin, whistling, while he thought it over.

"Of course next Spring ain't but six months away."

I kept quiet.

"That would give me time in Frisco to settle up our claims against the *Arctic Bird*."

"So 'twould, Howie."

"And I could come up again with the fleet next Spring."

"Sure, Howie."

"But wouldn't she have to go to Frisco?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Howie," I says. "I'll settle with her father for their claim on the *Arctic Bird*. He's the one. I'll do it to-day. Everybody'll be satisfied."

"Except Loalla," says Howie. "And me."

"Six months ain't so long," I says. Howie give a sigh.

"I s'pose I've got to tell her."

"All right," I says. "Now let's get to work."

Six hours later the *Arctic Bird* was patched and free of ice, her sails set and drawing, while the crew manned the pumps. Ahead of her steamed the *Pursuer*, already under way.

Most of the settlement Eskimos were lined up along the shore, watching us, but some were in their kyaks, paddling round and chaffing the crew. Loalla was there, paddling her kyak close to the stern of the ship, while Howie stood on deck trying to talk to her.

"Oh, Loalla," sang out Howie, "don't forget! I'll be back. Sure! I'll be back!"

The breeze caught the sails of the *Arctic Bird*. She forged ahead, the little

waves slapping the ship's sides as she slowly gained her way. Howie hollered, but his voice couldn't hardly be heard.

Little by little Loalla in her kyak was dropping astern. She stopped paddling and raised her arm aloft.

Howie, on the deck of the *Arctic Bird*, held up his two hands like a megaphone and shouted into 'em, while he strained his eyes t'wards the little kyak tossing in the water.

"Don't forget, Loalla!" he hollered. "Don't forget! I'll be back!"

But you couldn't hardly make out a word.

So that's the story. It all happened a consid'able time ago. Things have changed in the Arctic since then. There don't seem to be the interest there used to be.

What's that? Did Howie and Loalla marry? Did he go back there with the fleet next Spring?

He did not. There was money came to him out of this salvage of the *Arctic Bird*. He left the sea, set up in the insurance business on his own account and done very well. He married my daughter. They're living in New Bedford at the present time.





THE ART OF TATTOOING IN JAPAN

By FREDERIC DE GARIS

MANY an old-timer in Uncle Sam's land and sea forces carries on his skin specimens of Japanese tattooing—acquired, in many cases, in Nagasaki, where there are some expert tattooers. In former days the warships and transports journeying to and from Manila and China ports tarried at Nagasaki long enough for a man determined upon having himself decorated to obtain something worthwhile; nowadays the wireless and the system developed for taking on coal at that port does not allow time enough for very elaborate work.

Among many Japanese the urge to be tattooed still prevails and can not be denied despite its prohibition by the authorities—and prohibitions, you may be assured, work out in Japan just as they do elsewhere in the world. The result is that here and there, especially in summer when the heat impels discarding every superfluous bit of raiment, a traveler occasionally sees some intricately designed tattooing in black and red on the native hide—on body, arms and legs. And when one makes a special quest, under the right auspices, as did the writer in gathering material for this article, then the discovery of really artistic tattooing is amazing and one is surprised at the number of persons so ornamented.

Tattooing is a fad among what is called the lower class of people, principally workmen, especially the head workmen among carpenters, stone masons and other callings, and among volunteer firemen the chief fireman usually is tattooed. Vanity

is back of it all, the love of display.

In a country where the public bath is utilized so frequently as in Japan it gives a Japanese a feeling of superiority and great satisfaction if, when he is ready for the bath, his tattooed body excites the envy of his fellow bathers; so it has become a custom for boss firemen, boss carpenters, and the boss of this-and-that to be as elaborately tattooed as his purse allows as an evidence of importance. Other workmen are also tattooed, but even the small cost of the work is enough to bar ordinary workmen in a land where the daily wage is low.

Dr. Masaichi Fukushi, an authority on the subject, states that tattooing has been practised in Japan since mythical times, and that tattoo marks appear to have been designed to emphasize racial or tribal differences. This view is borne out by the Ainu, the aborigines of Japan, a fast diminishing race now driven into the northern islands, whose women tattoo their faces around the mouth, using soot as a base and fixing the pattern with a wash of a bark decoction.

This tattooing is a progressive operation, young girls starting it with a small tattoo on the upper lip, which, as they advance in age is gradually extended until, at the time of marriage, the final effect is that of a large, graceful, dark blue mustache with ends carefully finished into an upward twist on the upper lip, and just under the lower lip a small solid triangle with the point downward, like a goatee. This custom is accounted for in

one of the tenets of the Ainus which declares that, "There is a good deal of bad blood in women which must be taken out . . . tattooing was therefore introduced as a means of letting the bad blood escape, and thus making the body strong." Other patterns and bands, etc. are tattooed on the arms and hands; sometimes across the forehead, or between the eyebrows.

From ancient times tattooing has been in vogue in the South Sea Islands, from where, some authorities hold, came a branch of the Japanese race. There tattooing was an heroic ordeal, the complicated facial designs being literally chiseled out of the flesh by means of fish bones, thorns or shells, and the wounds covered with coloring matter—much in the same way as the old Maori warriors of New Zealand treated their faces and bodies, first digging out the flesh with a small bone instrument and coloring the imprint with a blue-black pigment obtained by burning certain woods. This custom is still practised among the women of a few tribes—perhaps for the same reason as that given for the tattoos of Ainu women.

From the dawn of regular history far down into the Middle Ages, tattooing seems also to have been used on criminals, in the same way that branding was formerly used in Europe—which probably accounts for the contempt still felt for tattooing by the Japanese upper classes.

In Japan, the majority of men and women apply for tattooing between the ages of 16 and 22; the limit is about 40 years. Extensive and complicated designs usually require from six months to a year or more for completion, depending upon the strength and constitution of the subject and the state of his finances—if halting in this latter respect the tattooing may be drawn out for several years.



THE TATTOOER in the main charges according to the intricacy of the design, but a contract is made as each piece of the work progresses, i.e., should the tattooing be in one color over a considerable space—

say on a forearm, where rapid work can be done—the charge is so much a square inch and is less than where more careful work has to be done. The pricking instruments are ordinary sewing needles fastened on a bamboo stem, and there are stems with one needle for delicate lines or spots, others with a row of from four to nine needles for larger surfaces, with other sizes in between.

The ink is fed so that it seeps down the needles into the skin—and usually the person to be tattooed furnishes his own ink in order to be sure of its quality. The highest grade of *sumi*, the black ink used on the brushes by Japanese when they write letters, is used, and for the reds *shu*, the paste-like ink used when a Japanese applies his seal to a document or letter, is employed. It is stated that these inks never fade—that when the skin is cut at any time afterward the ink is seen to be pure black or red, its bluish appearance in the one case and subdued red or pink in the other being due to its covering of cuticle and to its thickness.

The process is as follows: The tattooer places his flat hand on his victim, then using one of his fingers or his thumb as a fulcrum he applies his instrument as a lever to pick up and lift the cuticle and deposit the ink just under it, the instrument being held on a slant like a pen while writing. The needles, in the hands of an expert, draw little or no blood, and there is little or no swelling of the flesh but often there is considerable pain after a treatment especially if the tattooing has been done on the soft skin of the inside thighs, under the arms, or other tender spots. But a hot bath usually puts a man in condition for the next day's treatment. A treatment lasts from a half hour to one and a half hours, depending upon the strength and vigor of the subject; and the frequency of the treatments also depends upon these same conditions. Usually, however, two or three days are allowed to elapse between treatments.

During the past twenty years or so Dr. Fukushi has examined more than one thousand tattooed persons. He states

that the majority of them were tattooed on one arm only. Next in number, in their order, were those tattooed on both arms, back, abdomen, breast, thigh and thereabout, soles of the feet, inside the ear, bald heads, and last, entire bodies. Well known heroes of olden days, principally warriors, are popular designs; so are the heroes and heroines of dramas and novels that are popular with the masses. Fire fighters' emblems and courtesans' processions are well liked; so are representations of a favorite actor in one of his rôles, as are the mammoth wrestling champions that catch the fancy of the populace. The serpent, bullfrog and slug trio (a children's game of olden times), is also seen. Wild beasts: dragons, tigers, etc. remain popular, and in many different ways are depicted the lion and peony, sparrow and bamboo combinations, carp leaping up a rapid, powerful deities and legendary ghosts.

Novel designs noted by Dr. Fukushi were one of a cat on the hip pictured as playing with a towel of spotted pattern, which changed its position as its owner walked; another of cobwebs on the shoulder, in which two red maple leaves had become entwined, which was linked by a thread with a spider on the hip. An odd design was that of playing cards scattered all over the body, one of them on the sole of the foot; and the large red wooden gong tattooed on the abdomen of a fat man certainly was unusual, as was that of a tomb on the same portion of the body with the navel cavity tattooed to represent a vessel for burning incense.

There were chrysanthemums, peonies and other flowers; and butterflies on and around the chest and navel, and a serpent aiming to capture a breast designed as a jewel. The god of lightning and thunder amid black clouds on a man's back has so surprised a servant maid tattooed on the right thigh, who had been doing some washing in a tub, that the girl is pictured as tumbling head over heels, tub and all; and this same god portrayed on the body of an engaging, adventurous female robber nicknamed Kaminari O-shin—

Thunder Shin—who operated in Osaka and vicinity in the 60's, was such an artistic piece of work that after her execution her tattooed skin was preserved in the Kyoto Imperial University!

One's devotion to creed is shown by a necklace of Buddhist beads around the neck. There was one design of Nichiren Shonin, the militant founder of the Nichiren sect, on the left shoulder, a beautiful woman on the right shoulder and a serpent encircling the trunk, to illustrate the legend which has it that when Nichiren noticed the woman among his hearers he detected her falsity, whereupon she became a serpent. A person's spiritual awakening is sometimes perpetuated in tattoo in the form of Buddhist prayers, classical sayings and moral precepts.



IN THESE modern days the banners of the nation, the Rising Sun or the Full Red Sun, one or the other, is sometimes seen tattooed on the arms, breast or back of sailors, and it is a favorite with Japanese exiles. Of late wrist watches, gramophones combined with one's sweetheart, and airplanes are in vogue, but it is not likely that the reported fad among London's "smart women" of having garters with butterfly buckles tattooed just above the knee will spread to Japan for the reason that as stockings are not part of a Japanese woman's gear there is no call for garters or their pictured substitutes.

Tattooing is regarded as being dangerous to persons of delicate physique and, in any case while the treatment is under way, the subject must abstain from drinking intoxicating beverages and emotional excitement.

On various hikes away from beaten paths the writer has noted some very artistic examples of tattooing, but perhaps the best of all was that found recently on the body of a head fireman, a contractor and also head of a coolie gang, in a village of Hakone, a mountainous district about two hours by rail from Yokohama. This man, now forty-nine years old, said the tattooing was made when he was

nineteen years of age; that it required about three months of rather steady work to execute—usually six months would be required for such a complicated design, but as he was a strong and robust lad it was completed in the shorter time.

The story pricked into the skin is that of Benkei, a famous character in the history and lore of Japan. He is here pictured as a lad at the age of nineteen, when in his day the hair of boys of his age was done up, in the style called *chigo*, a sort of pompadour. The design shows Benkei in a sitting posture, clothed in a spotted kimono; his right arm is seen at the left of the backbone, the sole and toes of his left foot show just above the buttock and his right leg is seen below his kimono on the man's left thigh. A scaly dragon is intertwined about the man's body, the head and bulk of it being seen on the man's shoulders. On the front of the right arm is a small, full sized picture of Kintaro, on the left arm one of Momotaro, both strong boys whose legendary exploits are known to every Japanese lad, and whose effigies are always brought out from the family's treasures at the time of the Boys' Festival, held annually on May 5th, as an inspiration for the lads of the family. The combination of reds and blues is very striking and some of the work is so minute that it almost requires a microscope to bring it out. All the work, the man said, was done by the tattooer without a preliminary sketch.

The story back of the design comes from the legend that when the father of Benkei passed away his spirit took on the form of a dragon and that sometimes in this form his father came back to the ancestral home to ascertain whether or not proper respect was being paid to his memory . . . and at these times Benkei would produce his father's spirit tablet and the tablets of his ancestors from the god-shelf, whereupon the dragon, satisfied, would take his departure.

It was noted that the dragon design did not extend entirely across the chest but that it was in the shape of an open bolero jacket with the natural skin show-

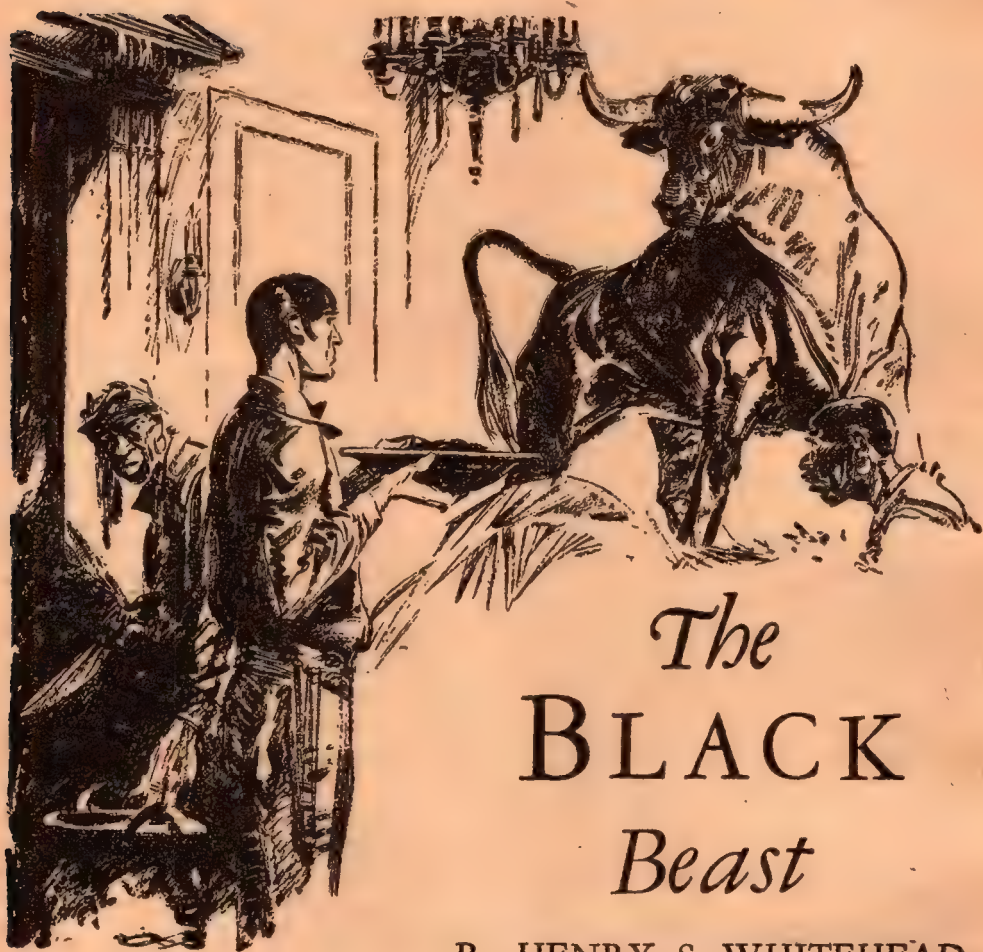
ing between the two sides. Upon being questioned about this the man said it was made in this way for the reason that a superstition persisted in the district that if the chest was fully tattooed some ailment would accrue in old age to the tattooed person which no doctor could cure.

It is not known when tattooing in Japan reached its pictorial excellence, but it is known that the art reached a feverish stage from 1804 to 1830, in the Tokugawa Shogunate era. Not only gamblers, firemen, palanquin bearers and the like, but also the owners of large shops felt it a disgrace to be without some tattooing on their bodies, and underpaid employees solicited contributions from their friends and superiors to enable them to acquire elaborate tattooing. The quality of this artistic tattooing, thoroughly Japanese in its conception and style, is as far superior to ordinary tattooing as is the painting of an old master to that of a novice.

Tattooing was made a penal offense soon after the Meiji Restoration (1868) at a time when the Japanese, thoroughly imbued with Occidental ideas and notions, were crazily jettisoning their dress and customs, and adopting those of Europe, whether suitable or not. It appears that certain officials, then conceiving the idea that Japan would be regarded as a barbarous nation by Europeans if tattooing was allowed, decided that the practise must stop.

And then came what undoubtedly was the most staggering jolt these officials ever had in connection with tattooing—and one which rocked the foundation of their belief—when in 1881 a young English prince, while visiting Japan, knowing that world travelers had sometimes managed through underground channels to acquire specimens of the native tattooer's art on their own persons, did likewise, with admirable effect—and Prince George, now his Majesty, King George V, departed for his homeland thoroughly content with the figure of a dragon tattooed on his arm. Since that time the teeth of the tattooing edict have lost their former grip.

A Story of Haitian Voodoo



The **BLACK** *Beast*

By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

DIAGONALLY across the Sunday Market in Christiansted, on the island of Santa Cruz, from the house known as Old Moore's, which I occupied one season—that is to say, along the southern side of the ancient marketplace of the old city, built upon the abandoned site of the yet older French town of Bassin—there stands, in faded, austere grandeur, another and much larger old house known as Gannett's. For close to half a century Gannett House stood vacant and idle, its solid masonry

front along the marketplace presenting a forlorn and aloof appearance, with its rows of closely shuttered windows, its stones darkened and discolored, its whole appearance stern and forbidding.

During that fifty years or so in which it had stood shut up and frowning blankly at the mass of humanity which passed its massive bulk and its forbidding closed doors, there had been made, by various persons, efforts enough to have it opened. Such a house, one of the largest private dwellings in the West Indies,

and one of the handsomest, closed up like this, and out of use, as it transpired upon serious inquiry, merely because such was the will of its arbitrary and rather mysterious absentee proprietor whom the island had not seen for a middle aged man's lifetime, could hardly fail to appeal to prospective renters.

I know, because he has told me so, that the Rev. Fr. Richardson, of the English Church, tried to engage it as a convent for his sisters in 1926. I tried to get a season's lease on it myself, in the year when, failing to do so, I took Old Moore's instead—a house of strange shadows and generous rooms and enormous, high doorways through which, times innumerable, Old Moore himself, bearing, if report were believable, a strange burden of mental apprehension, had slunk in bygone years, in shuddering, dreadful anticipation . . .

Inquiry at the Government offices had elicited the fact that old Lawyer Malling, a survival of the Danish régime, who lived in Christiansted and was invaluable to our Government officials when it came to disentangling antique Danish records, was in charge of Gannett's. Herr Malling, interviewed in turn, was courteous but firm. The house could not be rented under any considerations; such were his instructions — permanent instructions, filed among his records. No, it was impossible, out of the question. I recalled some dim hints I had received of an old scandal.

Over a glass of excellent sherry which hospitable Herr Malling provided, I asked various questions. The answers to these indicated that the surviving Gannetts were utterly obdurate in the matter. They had no intention of returning. Repairs—the house was built like a fortress—had not, so far, been required. They had assigned no reason for their determination to keep their Christiansted property closed? No—and Herr Malling had no option in the matter. No, he had written before, twice; once in behalf of the rector of the English Church, just recently; also, ten, eleven years ago when a professor from Berlin, sojourning in the islands, had

conceived the idea of a tropical school for tutoring purposes and had cast a thickly bespectacled eye on the old mansion. No, it was impossible.

"Well, *skaal*, Herr Canevin! Come now—another, of course! A man can not travel on one leg, you know; that is one of our sayings."

But three years after this interview with Herr Malling, the old house was opened at last. The very last remaining Gannett, it appeared, had gone to his reward, from Edinburgh, and the title had passed to younger heirs who had had no personal connection, no previous residence in the West Indies.

Herr Malling's new instructions, transmitted through an Aberdeen solicitor, were to rent the property to the best advantage, to entertain offers for its disposal in fee simple, and to estimate possible repairs and submit this estimate to Aberdeen. I learned this some time after the instructions had been transmitted. Herr Malling was not one to broadcast the private and confidential business of his clients. I learned thereof from Mrs. Ashton Garde, over tea and small cakes in the vast, magnificent drawing room of Gannett's, a swept and garnished Gannett's which she had taken for the season and whose 18th Century mahogany she had augmented and lightened with various furniture of her own in the process which had transformed the old fortress-like abode into one of the most attractive residences I have ever been privileged to visit.

Mrs. Garde, an American, and a widow, was in the late forties, a very charming and delightful woman of the world, an accomplished hostess, incidentally a person of substantial means, and the mother of three children. Of these, a married daughter lived in Florida and did not visit the Gardes during their Winter in Santa Cruz. The other children, Edward, just out of Harvard; and Lucretia, twenty-four, were with their mother. Both of them, though diversely—Edward, an athlete, had no particular conversation—had inherited the maternal charm as well

as the very striking good looks of their late father whose portrait—a splendid Sargent—hung over one of the two massive marble mantelpieces which stood at either end of the great drawing room.

It was quite near the end where the portrait hung, low because the mantelshelf, lacking a fireplace under it, stood two feet higher than an ordinary mantelshelf, balancing a ceiling fifteen feet in height, that we sat upon my first visit to the Gardes, and I noticed that Mrs. Garde, whose tea table was centered on the mantelpiece, as it were, and who sat facing me across the room's width, glanced up, presumably at the portrait, several times.

I am of an analytical mentality, even in small matters. I guessed that she was trying out the recent hanging of this very magnificent portrait "with her eye", as people do until they have become accustomed to new placements and the environmental aspects of a new or temporary home and, my attention thus drawn to it, I made some comment upon the portrait, and rose to examine it more closely. It repaid scrutiny.

But Mrs. Garde, as though with a slight note of deprecation, turned the conversation away from the portrait, a fact which I noticed in passing, and which was emphasized, as I thought of it later, by her sidelong glances, upward and to her right, in the intervals of pouring tea for a considerable group of company, which kept going up there again and again. I gave to these facts no particular interpretation. There was no reason for analysis. But I noted them nevertheless.

I saw considerable of the Gardes, for the next few weeks, and then, because I had planned some time before to go down the islands as far as Martinique when the *Margaret* of the Bull-Insular Line which plies among the upper islands should go there for several days' sojourn in drydock, I did not see them at all for more than two weeks during which I was renewing my acquaintance with Martinique French in the interesting capital town of Fort de France.

I ran in to call on the Gardes shortly after my arrival on Santa Cruz at the conclusion of this trip, and found Mrs. Garde alone. Edward and Lucretia were playing tennis and later dining with the Covingtons at Hermon Hill Estate House.

I was immediately struck with the change which had taken place in Mrs. Garde. It was as though some process of infinite weariness had laid its hold upon her. She looked shrunken, almost fragile. Her eyes, of that dark, brilliant type which accompanies a bistre complexion, appeared enormous, and as she looked at me, her glances alternating with the many which she kept casting up there in the direction of her husband's portrait, I could not escape the conviction that her expression bore now that aspect which I can only describe by the somewhat trite term "haunted".

I was, sharply, immediately, surprised; greatly intrigued by this phenomenon. It was one of those obvious things which strike one directly without palliation, like a blow in the face unexpectedly delivered; an unmistakable change, hinting, somehow, of tragedy. It made me instantaneously uneasy, moved me profoundly, for I had liked Mrs. Garde very much indeed, and had anticipated a very delightful acquaintance with this family which centered about its head. I noticed her hand quite definitely trembling as she handed me my cup of tea, and she took one of those sidelong glances, up and to the right, in the very midst of that hospitable motion.

I drank half my tea in a mutual silence, and then, looking at Mrs. Garde, I surprised her in the middle of another glance. She was just withdrawing her eyes. She caught my eyes, and, perhaps, something of the solicitude which I was feeling strongly at the moment, and her somberly pallid face flushed slightly. She looked down, busied herself with the paraphernalia of her circular tea tray. I spoke then.

"Haven't you been entirely well, Mrs. Garde? It seemed to me that, perhaps, you were not looking altogether robust,

if you don't mind my mentioning it." I tried to make my tone sufficiently jocular to carry off my really solicitous inquiry lightly; to leave room for some rejoinder in somewhat the same vein.

She turned tragic eyes upon me. There was no smile on her drawn face. The unexpected quality of her reply brought me up standing.

"Mr. Canevin—help me!" she said simply, looking straight into my eyes.

I was around the tea table in two seconds, had her shaking hands, which were as cold as lumps of ice, in mine. I held them and looked down at Mrs. Garde. "With all my heart," I said. "Tell me, please, when you can, now or later, Mrs. Garde, what it is."

She expressed her thanks for this reassurance with a nod, withdrew her hands, sat back in her rattan chair and closed her eyes. I thought she was going to faint and, sensing this, perhaps, she opened her eyes and said:

"I'm quite all right, Mr. Canevin—that is, so far as the immediate present is concerned. Will you not sit down, finish your tea? Let me freshen your cup."

Somewhat relieved, I resumed my own chair and, over a second cup of tea, looked at my hostess. She had made a distinct effort to pull herself together. We sat for some minutes in silence. Then, I refusing more tea, she rang, and the butler came in and removed the tray and placed cigarets on the table between us. It was only after the servant had gone and closed the drawing room door behind himself that she leaned forward impulsively, and began to tell me what had occurred.



DESPITE her obvious agitation and the state of her nerves which I have attempted to indicate, Mrs. Garde went straight to the point without any beating about the bush. Even as she spoke it occurred to me from the form of her phraseology that she had been planning how, precisely, to express herself. She did so now very concisely and clearly.

"Mr. Canevin," she began, "I have no doubt that you have noticed my glancing up at the wall space above this mantel. It has grown, one would say, to be a nervous habit with me. You have observed it, have you not?"

I said that I had and had supposed that the glances had been directed toward her husband's portrait.

"No," resumed Mrs. Garde, looking at me fixedly as though to keep her eyes off the place over the mantelshef, "it is not at the picture, Mr. Canevin. It is at a place directly above it—about three feet above its top edge to be precise."

She paused at this point, and I could not help looking toward the point she had indicated. As I did so, I caught sight of her long and rather beautiful hands. They were clamped against the edge of the low table, as though she was holding on to that as if to something solid and material—an anchor for her nerves—and I observed that the knuckles were white with the pressure she was exerting.

I saw nothing but a wide space of empty, gray sanded wall which ran up cleanly to the high ceiling and out on both sides of the portrait, a clear space, artistically left vacant, one would surmise, by whoever had possessed the good sense to leave the Sargent alone with its wide blank background of gray wall space.

I looked back at Mrs. Garde and found her gaze fixed determinedly on my face. It was as though she held it there, by a sheer effort of the will, forcing herself not to look up at the wall.

I nodded at her reassuringly.

"Please continue, if you will, Mrs. Garde," I said, and leaned back in my chair and lighted a cigaret from the silver box on the table between us.

Mrs. Garde relaxed and leaned back in her lounge chair, but continued looking straight at me. When she resumed what she was saying she spoke slowly, with a certain conscious effort at deliberation. My instinct apprised me that she was forcing herself to this course; that if she did not concentrate in some such fashion she would let go and scream aloud.

"Perhaps you are familiar with Du Maurier's book, 'The Martian,' Mr. Canevin," and, as I nodded assent, she continued, "You will remember when Josselin's eye began to fail him, he was puzzled and dreadfully worried by discovering a blind spot in his sound eye—it was emphasized by the failure of the other one, and he was vastly distressed—thought he was going stone blind, until the little Continental oculist reassured him, explained the *punctum caecum*—the blind spot which is in the direct line of vision with the optic nerve itself. Do you recall the incident?"

"Perfectly," said I, and nodded again reassuringly.

"Well, I remember testing my own blind spots after reading that when I was quite a young girl," resumed Mrs. Garde. "I daresay a great many people tried the experiment. There is, of course, a line of vision *outside* each blind spot, to the left of the left eye's ordinary focus and, correspondingly, to the right of that of the other eye. In addition to this variation of ordinary vision, as I have ascertained, there is another condition, especially evident in the sight of the middle aged. That is that the direct line of ordinary vision becomes, as it were, 'worn', and the vision itself, in the case of a person especially who has used his or her eyes a great deal—over embroidery, or reading, or some professional work which requires concentrated looking, I mean—is somewhat less acute than when the eyes are used at an unaccustomed angle."

She paused, looked at me as though to ascertain whether or not I had been following her speech. Once more I nodded. I had listened carefully to every word. Mrs. Garde, resuming, now became acutely specific.

"As soon as we had arrived here, Mr. Canevin, the very first thing that I had to attend to was the suitable hanging of this portrait of Mr. Garde." She did not look toward it, but indicated the portrait with a gesture of her hand in its direction.

"I looked over that section of the wall space to ascertain the most advantageous

point from which to hang it. I found the place that seemed to me suitable and had the butler drive in a nail in the place I indicated. The picture was then hung and is still in the place I selected.

"This process had required considerable looking, on my part, at the blank wall. It was not, really, until the portrait was actually hung that I realized—that it occurred to me—that something—something, Mr. Canevin, which had gradually become clearer, better defined I mean, was there—above the picture—something which, within that outside angle of vision, outside the blind spot of my right eye as I sat there and looked up and to the right, became more evident every time I looked up at the wall. Of course, I looked at the picture many times, to make quite sure I had it in the right spot on the wall. In doing so the outside vision, the portion of the eye which was not worn and more or less dimmed from general usage, took in the place I have indicated. It is, as I have mentioned, about three feet above the top of Mr. Garde's portrait.

"Mr. Canevin, the thing has grown—grown!"

Suddenly Mrs. Garde broke down, buried her face in trembling hands, leaning forward upon the table like a child hiding its eyes in a game, and her slim body shook with uncontrollable, dry sobs.

This time, I perceived, the best thing for me to do was to sit quietly and wait until the poor, overwrought lady had exhausted her hysterical seizure. I waited, therefore, in perfect silence, trying, mentally, to give my hostess, as well as I could, the assurance of my complete sympathy and my desire and willingness to help her in all possible ways.

Gradually, as I had anticipated, the spasm of weeping worked itself out, minimized itself and finally passed. Mrs. Garde raised her head, composed herself, again looked at me, this time with a markedly greater degree of calmness and self-possession. The gust of hysteria, although it had shaken her, had, in its ordinary effect, done her good. She even smiled at me a little wanly.

"I fear that you will think me very weak, Mr. Canevin," she said finally.

I smiled quietly.

"When it is possible, it would be of assistance if I could know of this matter as exactly as possible," I said. "Try, please, to tell me just what it is that you see on the wall, Mrs. Garde."

Mrs. Garde nodded, spent a little while composing herself. She even used her vanity box, a trifling gold affair with the inevitable mirror. After this she was able to smile herself. Then, suddenly quite serious again, she said simply:

"It is the head and part of the body—the upper, forward part, to be precise, Mr. Canevin—of what seems to be a young bull. At first only the head; then, gradually, the shoulders and neck. It seems quite utterly grotesque, absurd, does it not?"

"But, Mr. Canevin, extraordinary as that must seem to you, it is—" she looked down at her twitching hands, then, with a visible effort, back at me, her face now suddenly ghastly under the fresh makeup which she had so recently applied to it. "Mr. Canevin, that is not the terrifying part of it. That, indeed, might, perhaps, be construed as some kind of optical illusion, or something of the sort. It is—" again she hesitated, looked down; then, with a greater effort than before back at me—"it is the—expression—of the face, Mr. Canevin! It is, I assure you, quite *human*, terrifying, reproachful! And, Mr. Canevin, there is blood, a thick single stream of blood, which runs down from the center of the forehead, over the creature's poor nose! It is—somehow, pathetic, Mr. Canevin. It is a very frightful experience to have. It has utterly ruined my peace of mind. That is all there is to it, Mr. Canevin—the head and neck and shoulders of a young bull, with that blood running down from its forehead, and that expression . . ."

At once, upon hearing this salient particularization of Mrs. Garde's extraordinary optical experience, that analytical faculty of mine began forthwith to run riot. There were points of contact

with previous knowledge of the spectral beliefs of the blacks and similar phenomena of our West Indies in that picture, affairs wherein I am not wholly without experience. The bull, as at once it occurred to me, is the principal sacrificial animal of the main voodoo cults, up and down the islands, wherever the old African gods of "Guinea" prevail.



BUT a bull, with such an expression on its face as my hostess had briefly described, with blood running down its nose, up there on the wall space above the high mantelshelf in Gannett House—this was, truly, a puzzler! I shifted, I remember, forward in my chair, raised a hand to command Mrs. Garde's attention. I had thought of something.

"Tell me, if you please, Mrs. Garde," said I. "Is the appearance which you have described close against the wall, or—otherwise?"

"It is well out from the wall itself," replied Mrs. Garde, striving to express herself with precision. "It seems, I should say, to be several feet away from the wall proper, toward us, of course—not as though *behind* the wall, I mean—and, I omitted to say, Mr. Canevin, that when I look at it for any considerable length of time, the head and shoulders seem to sag forward and downward. It is, I should say, as though the animal were just freshly hurt, were beginning to sink down to its death."

"Thank you," said I. "It must have been a considerable ordeal to tell me about it so clearly and exactly. However, it is very simple psychology to understand that the process has done you good. You have shared your strange experience with some one else. That, of course, is a step in the right direction. Now, Mrs. Garde, will you permit me to 'prescribe' for you?"

"Most assuredly, Mr. Canevin," returned Mrs. Garde. "I am, frankly, in such a state over this dreadful thing, that I am prepared to do anything to secure some relief from it. I have not, of course,

mentioned it to my children. I have not said a word to anybody but you. It is not the sort of thing one can discuss—with anybody and everybody."

I bowed across the table at this implied compliment, this expression of confidence in me, after all, the most casual of Mrs. Garde's acquaintances.

"I suggest," said I, "that the entire Garde family take an excursion down the islands, like the one from which I have just returned. The *Samaria*, of the Cunard Line, will be at St. Thomas on Thursday. Today is Monday. It would be quite a simple matter to make your reservations by wireless, or even by cable to St. Thomas. Go away for two or three weeks; come back when you are ready. And leave me the key of Gannett House, Mrs. Garde."

My hostess nodded. She had listened avidly to this suggestion.

"I will do so, Mr. Canevin. I think there will be no argument from Edward and Lucretia. They were, as a matter of fact, envying you your visit to Martinique."

"Good," said I encouragingly. "We may call that settled then. I might add that the *Grebe* is going back to St. Thomas tomorrow morning. It would be an excellent idea for you to go along. I will telephone the dispatching secretary at once for the permission, and consult Dr. Pelletier who is chief municipal physician there. He has a broad mind and a large experience of affairs such as this."

Again Mrs. Garde nodded acquiescently. She had reached, it was obvious, the place where she would carry out any intelligent suggestion to the end of terminating that optical horror of hers.

The Garde family left on board the little Government transport, which runs between our Virgin Islands and from them to and from Porto Rico, at eight o'clock the following morning. I saw them off at the Christiansted wharf, and the following afternoon a wireless from St. Thomas apprised me that Dr. Pelletier had proved very helpful, and that

reservations for a three weeks' cruise about the islands had been secured for all three of them on board the Cunarder.

I breathed easily, for the first time. I had assumed a fairly considerable responsibility in my advice. I was now, for some three weeks, lord of the manor at Gannett House. I arranged, through Mrs. Gannett's butler, a white man whom she had brought with her, to give the house servants a day's vacation for a picnic—a common form of pleasure seeking among West Indian blacks—and requested him, quoting Mrs. Garde's desire—she had given me *carte blanche* in the entire affair—to take the same day off himself, or even two days. He could, I pointed out, go over to St. Thomas on the next trip of the *Grebe* and come back the following day. There would be much to see in St. Thomas with its fine shops.

The butler made this arrangement without any demur, and I called on Fr. Richardson, rector of the English Church. Fr. Richardson, to whom I told the whole story, did no more than nod his wise West Indian head. He had spent a priestly lifetime combating the "stupidness" of the blacks. He knew precisely what to do, without any further suggestions from me.

On the day when the servants were all away from Gannett House, Fr. Richardson came with his black bag and exorcised the house from top to bottom, repeating his formulas and casting his holy water in room after room of the great old mansion. Then, gravely accepting the twenty-franc note which I handed him for his poor, and blessing me, the good and austere priest departed, his services just rendered being to him, I daresay, the merest routine of a day's work.

I breathed easier now. God, as even the inveterate voodooists of Snake ridden Haiti admit in their holy week practises—when every altar of the Snake is stripped of its vile symbols, these laid face downward on the floors, covered with rushes, and the crucifix placed on the altars—God is infinitely more powerful than even the mighty Snake of Guinea with his

attendant demigods! I believe in being on the safe side.

After this, I merely waited until Mrs. Garde's return. Every few days I ran in and spoke with Robertson the butler. Otherwise I left the healing air of the sea to do its work of restoration on Mrs. Garde, confident that after her return, refreshed by the change, there would be no recurrence of her horror.



THE thing was a problem, and a knotty one, from my viewpoint. I should not rest, I was fully aware, until, by hook or crook, I had satisfied myself about the background for the strange appearance which that lady had recounted to me across her tea table. In the course of the cogitations, wherein I exhausted my own fund of West Indian occult lore, I remembered old Lawyer Mallings. There was a possible holder of clues! I have briefly alluded to what I might call a vague penumbra of some ancient scandal hanging about Gannett's. If there existed any real background for this, and anybody now alive knew the facts, it would be Herr Mallings. He had passed his eightieth birthday. He had been personally acquainted, in his young manhood, with Angus Gannett, the last of that family to reside here. He had had charge of the property for a lifetime.

To old Mallings's, therefore, after due cogitation as to how I should present such a matter to that conservative ancient, I betook myself.

Herr Mallings received me with that Old World courtesy which makes a formal occasion out of the most commonplace visit. He produced his excellent sherry. He even used the formula—

"To what, Mr. Canevin, am I indebted for the honor of this most welcome visit?" Only he said ["dis" for "this", being a Danish West Indian.

After chatting of various local matters which were engaging the attention of the island at the moment, I delicately broached the subject upon which I had come.

I will attempt no full account of the fencing which led up to the main aspect of that conversation. Likewise the rather long impasse which promptly built itself up between this conservative old solicitor and myself. I could see, clearly enough, his viewpoint. This cautious questioning of mine had to do with the sacred affairs of an old client. Policy dictated silence; courteous silence; silence surrounded and softened by various politic remarks of palliative nature; silence, nevertheless, as definite as the solitudes of Quintana Roo in the midst of the Yucatan jungles.

But there was a key word. I had saved it up, probably subconsciously, possibly by design; a design based on instinct. I had mentioned no particulars of Mrs. Garde's actual account; that is, I had said nothing of the nature and quality of that which had been distressing her. At last, baffled at all points by the old gentleman's crusty conservatism, I sprung my possible bombshell. It worked!

It was that word "bull" which formed the key. When I had reached that far in my account of what Mrs. Garde had seen over the mantelshelf in Gannett House, and brought out that word, I thought, for an instant, that the old gentleman, who had gone quite white, with blue about his ancient lips, was going to faint.

He did not faint, however. With something almost like haste he poured himself out a glass of his good sherry, drank it with an almost steady hand, set down the glass, turned to me and remarked—

"Wait!"

I waited while the old fellow potted out of his own hall, and listened to the *pat-pat-pat* of his carpet slippers as he went in search of something. He came back, looking quite as I had always seen him, his cheeks their usual apple red, the benign smile of a blameless old age again triumphant on his old lips. He set down an old fashioned cardboard filing case on the mahogany table beside the sherry decanter, looked over at me, nodded wisely and proceeded to open the filing case.

From this he took a thing somewhat like a large, old fashioned gentleman's wallet, which proved to be the binding placed by old school lawyers about particular documents, and unfolding this, and glancing at the heading of its contents, and once again nodding, this time to himself, Herr Malling handed the document, with a courteous bow, to me.

I took it, and listened to what the old gentleman was saying, while I examined it superficially. It consisted of many sheets of old fashioned, ruled foolscap, the kind of paper I have seen used for very old plantation accounts. I held it in my hand expectantly while Herr Malling talked.

"Mr. Canevin," he was saying, "I giff you this, my friend, because it contain de explanation of what haff puzzled you—naturally. It iss de account off precisely what hov happen in Gannett's, de Autumn of de year 1876, when Herr Angus Gannett, de late owner, haff jus' retorn from de United States where he haff been wisiting his relatives an' attending de Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia."

"I t'ink you foind, sir, dis document, dis personal account, explain all t'ings now impossible to—er—grasp! I feel free to giff it to you to—er—peruse, because de writer iss dead. I am bound, as you will observe—er—upon perusal, solely by the tenure off life in de testator—er—de narrator, I should say. Dis iss not a will; it iss merely a statement. You will, I imagine, sir, find diss of some interest. I did!"

With a bow to Herr Malling for his great courtesy, I proceeded to read:

II

Gannett House, Christiansted, D. W. I.
October 25th, 1876

MY VERY good friend and brother,
Rudolf Malling:

This will serve as instructions for you in the affair of the conduct of my property, the town residence on the south side of the Sunday Market which I here-

with, for purposes of custodial administration, place in your care. It is my purpose, on the twenty-ninth of this month, to take ship for England, thence direct to the City of Edinburgh; where my permanent address is to be No. 19, MacKinstrie's Lane, off Clarges Street, Edinburgh, Scotland. To this address all communications of every kind and sort whatsoever are to be addressed, both personal and concerning the property if need therefor should arise.

I direct and instruct that the house shall be closed permanently upon my departure, and so maintained permanently, the same being in your charge, and the statement of your outlay for this purpose of closing the house fast remitted to me at Edinburgh.

An explanation is due you, as I clearly perceive, for this apparently abrupt decision. I will proceed to make it herewith.

To do so I bind you to complete secrecy during the term of my natural life on the basis as of *****s'p—which, as a Bro. Freemason you will recognize, of course, even though thus informally given you, and keep my confidence as hereinafter follows strict and close as of the Craft.

I will begin, then, by reminding you of what you already know, to wit, that after the death of my mother, Jane Alicia MacMurtrie Gannett, my father, the late Fergus Gannett, Esq, caused me as well as his kinfolk in Scotland a vast and deep grief by resorting to that which has been the curse of numerous Caucasian gentfolk as well as of many of the baser sort throughout the length and breadth of the West India Islands. In short, my father entered upon a liaison with one Angelica Kofoed, a mulattress attached to our household and who had been the personal attendant of my late mother. This occurred in the year 1857.

As is also well known to you; a son was born of this union; and also my father, who, according to the law of the Danish West Indies, could have discharged his legal obligation by the payment of the sum of four hundred dollars to the moth-

er, chose, instead, in the infatuation of which he appeared possessed, to acknowledge this son and, by due process of our legal code, to legitimize him.

I was a little past my tenth birthday when the child later known as Otto Andreas Gannett was born, here in our old home where I write this. Thereafter my father ceased all relationship with the woman Angelica Kofoed, pensioned her and, shortly after her child was weaned, caused her, the pension being continued and assured her for the term of her natural life, to emigrate to the Island of St. Vincent, of which place she was a native.

My legal half-brother, Otto Andreas Gannett, was retained, with a nurse, in our residence, and grew to young manhood under our roof as a member of the family. I may say here that it is more possible that I should have been able to overcome my loathing and repugnance toward my half-brother had it not been that his character, as he developed from childhood into boyhood and from boyhood into youth, was such as definitely to preclude such an attitude.

I will be explicit to the extent of saying plainly that Otto Andreas "took after" the negro side of his blood heritage, although his mother was but an octoroon, no more than slightly "scorched of the blood", and appearing, like my half-brother, to be a Caucasian. I would not be misunderstood in this. I am very well aware that many of our worthiest citizens here in the West India Islands are of this mixed blood. It is a vexed and somewhat delicate question at best, at least here in our islands. Suffice it to say that the worst negro characteristics came out as Otto Andreas grew into young manhood. He bears today and doubtless will continue long to bear, an evil reputation, even among the blacks of this island; a reputation for wicked and lecherous inclination, a bad choice of low companions, a self-centered and egotistical demeanor and, worst of all, an incurable inclination toward the wicked and stupid practises of the blacks, with whom, to the shame of our house, he had consorted much before

his death in the Autumn of this year, 1876. I refer to what is known as *obeah*.

It is especially in this last mentioned particular that I found it impossible to countenance him. Fortunately my father departed this life five years ago, before this dreadful inclination toward the powers of the Evil One had sufficiently made themselves manifest in Otto Andreas to draw thereto my father's failing attention. I thank my God for that He was pleased to take my father away before he had that cross to bear.

I will not particularize farther than to say that the cumulation of these bad attributes in my half-brother formed the determining cause for my departure for the United States, May second, in this year, 1876. As you are aware, I left Otto Andreas here, with strict adjurations as to his conduct and, thinking to escape from continuous contact with him, which had grown unbearably hateful to me, went to New York, thence to the city of Philadelphia where I attended the Centennial Exposition in the hope of somewhat distracting my mind and, later, before returning toward the beginning of October, visited various of our kinfolk in the States of Maryland and Virginia.

I arrived on this island, sailing from New York via Porto Rico, on the nineteenth of October, landing at West-End and remaining overnight at the residence of our friend, Herr Mulgrav, the Judge of the Frederiksted Reconciling Court, and, through the courtesy of the Reverend Dr. Dubois of the West-End English Church, who very considerably loaned me his carriage and horses, drove the seventeen miles to Christiansted the following morning.

I arrived just before breakfast time, about a quarter before one o'clock P.M.

I will be explicit to inform you, my good friend and brother, that I had not been so futile minded as to anticipate that my long absence in America would have anything like a corrective effect upon my half-brother. Indeed I was not far from anticipating that I should have to face new rascalities, new stupidnesses up-

on his part, perpetrated in my absence from home. I anticipated, indeed, that my homecoming would be anything but a pleasant experience, for of such presage I had, in truth, ample background on which to base such an opinion. I arrived at my house, therefore, in anything but a cheerful frame of mind. I had gone away to secure some respite. I came home to meet I knew not what.

No man in his senses—I say it deliberately, for the purpose of warning you, my friend, as you proceed to read what I am about to write—however, could have anticipated what I did meet! I had, indeed, something like a warning of untowardness at home, on my way across the island from Frederiksted. You know how our island blacks show plainly on their faces what their inmost thoughts are, in some instances; how inscrutable they can be in other affairs. As I passed black people on the road, or in the estate fields, I observed nothing on the faces of those who recognized me save a certain commiseration. Murmurs came to my ears, indeed, from their mouths, as one or another murmured—

“Poor young marster!” Or such remarks as “Ooh, Gahd, him comin’ to trouble an’ calamity!”

This, of course, was the opposite of reassuring; yet I was not surprised. I had, you will remember, anticipated trouble, with Otto Andreas as its cause and root.

I will not dissemble that I expected something, as I have remarked, untoward.

I entered a strangely silent house—the first thing that came to me was a most outrageous smell! You are surprised, doubtless, at such a statement. I record the facts. My nostrils were instantaneously assailed, so soon as I had myself opened the door and stepped within, leaving Dr. Dubois’ coachman, Jens, to bring in my hand luggage, with a foul odor comparable to nothing less wretched than a cattle pen!

I say to you that it fairly took me by the throat. I called to the servants as soon as I was within, leaving the door open behind me to facilitate Jens with my

bags, and to let out some of that vile stench. I called Herman, the butler, and Josephine and Marianna, maids in the household. I even called out to Amaranth Niles, the cook. At the sound of my voice—the servants had not known of my arrival the night before—Herman and Marianna came running, their faces blank and stupid, in the fashion well known to you when our blacks have something to conceal.

I ordered them to take my bags to my bedroom, turned to give Jens the coachman a gratuity for his trouble, and turned back again to find Josephine staring at me through a doorway. The other two had disappeared by this time with my hand luggage. The rest, the trunks and so forth, heavier articles, were to be sent over from Frederiksted that afternoon by a carter.

“What is this frightful smell, Josephine?” I inquired. “The whole house is like a cattle pen, my girl. What has happened? Come now, tell me!”

The black girl stood in the doorway, her face quite inscrutable, and wrung her two hands together.

“Ooh, Gahd, sar, me cahn’t say,” she replied with that peculiarly irritating false stupidity which they can assume at will.

I said nothing. I did not wish to inaugurate my homecoming with any fault finding. Besides, the horrible smell might very well not be this girl’s fault. I stepped to the left along the inner gallery and into the hall* through the entrance door, which was shut. I opened it, and stepped in, I say . . .

My dear friend Malling, prepare yourself. You will be—well—surprised, to put the matter conservatively.

There, in the center of the hall, its neck turned about so as to look toward whoever had just opened the door from the inner gallery, in this case, myself—stood a young, coal black bullock!

Beside it, on the floor in the middle of the Bokhara rug which my grandfather had brought with him back from his

*A West Indian drawing room is commonly called the hall.

voyage to Turkestan in the year 1837, there was a crate, half filled with fresh grass and carrots; and nearby, and also on the rug, stood a large bucket of water. Wisps of the grass hung from the bullock's mouth as it stared at me for all the world as though to remark, "Who is this who intrudes, forsooth, upon my privacy here!"

Malling, I let myself go then. This—a bullock in my hall, in my town house!—this was too much! I rushed back into the gallery crying out for the servants, for Herman and Josephine and Marianna. They came, looking down at me, fearfully, over the balusters of the stairway, their faces gray with fear. I cursed them roundly, as you may well imagine. I conceive that even the godly Dr. Dubois himself would at least feel the desire so to express himself were he to return to his rectory and find a bullock stabled in his choicest room!



BUT all my words elicited nothing save that look of blank stupidity to which I have already referred; and when, in the midst of my diatribe, old Amaranth Niles, the cook, came hastening upon the scene from her kitchen, a long spoon in her fat old hand, she, who had been with us since my birth twenty-eight years before, likewise went stupid.

Suddenly I ceased reviling them for ingrates, for fools, for rapsallions, for gallows birds. It occurred to me, very shortly, that this rascality was none, could be none, of theirs, poor creatures. It was the latest devilment of my half-brother Otto Andreas. I saw it clearly. I collected myself. I addressed poor Herman in a milder tone.

"Come, Herman, get this beast out of the house immediately!" I pointed toward the now open door into the hall.

But Herman, despite this definite command of mine, never stirred. His face became an ashen hue and he looked at me imploringly. Then, slowly, his hands raised up above his head as he stood there on the stairway looking fearfully over the

baluster, he cried out, tremblingly:

"I cyan't, sar, fo' the good God an' help me de Lord — I cyan't dislodge de animal!"

I looked back at Herman with a certain degree of calmness. I addressed the man:

"Where is Mr. Otto Andreas?" I inquired.

At this simple query both maids on the stairs began to weep aloud, and old Amaranth Niles, the cook, who had been staring, pop eyed and silent through the doorway, turned with an unexpected agility and fled back to her kitchen. Herman, if possible, became a full shade paler. Unsteadily the man forced himself to come down the stairs, holding rigidly by the baluster. He turned and stepped toward me, his face gray and working and the beads of sweat standing thickly and heavily on his forehead. He dropped upon his knees before me there on the gallery floor and, his hands held up above his head, cried out:

"Him dead, sar, from day before yestiddy, sar—it de troof, me marster!"

I will confess to you, Malling, that the gallery reeled about me at this wholly unexpected news. Nobody had told me the night before. Just possibly my hosts had not been aware of it. Another question presented itself to my tottering mind, a question the answer to which would clear up that matter of not being told.

"What time did he die, Herman?" I managed to articulate. I was holding on by the baluster myself now.

"Late, sar," returned Herman, still on his knees, and swaying backward and forward. "P'rops two hour after midnight, sar. Him bury de nex' day, sar, dat am to say 'twas yestiddy afternoon, two o'clock, me marster. De body ain' keep good, sar, an' 'sides, all we ain' made sensible of your arrival, sar."

So that was why the Mullgraves had not told me. They simply had not known of my half-brother's death, would not know until today in the ordinary course of events, at that distance from Christiansted.

My first reaction, I will admit, was one of profound relief.

Otto Andreas would never—I confess to have thought—trouble me again; would not, indeed, again trouble any one with his shortcomings, his arrogance, his manifold evil habits, his villainies. I was premature . . .

Then, almost mechanically, I suppose, my mind turned to that shambles in my hall, that barnyard beast stabled there, the priceless rug sodden with its filth. I turned to Herman and spoke.

"Get up, Herman! Stand up, man! There is no occasion for you to act in this fashion. I was, naturally, very much annoyed at the animal being in the hall. I am, in fact, still vexed about it. Tell me—" as the man rose to his feet and stood trembling before me—"who placed it there, and why has it not been removed?"

At this Herman visibly shook from head to foot, and again his dark visage, which had been somewhat restored to its wonted coloration, turned gray with fright. I sensed somehow that he was less frightened at me than at something else. I am, of course, accustomed to the peculiarities of our negroes. I spoke to him again, very gently, voicing my previous idea which had stayed my first great anger.

"Did Mr. Otto Andreas place the animal there?"

Herman, apparently not trusting himself to speak, nodded his head at me.

"Come now, man, get it out quickly!" I commanded.

Again, to my profound annoyance, Herman fell on his knees before me, mumbled abjectly his statement of inability to carry out my orders.

I struggled with myself to be patient. I had been, I conceived, rather sorely tried. I took Herman by the shoulder, drew him to his feet, walked him, unresisting, along the gallery and into my office. I closed the door behind us and sat down at my work table where I do my accounts and write—where I am now writing this to you. Herman, I perceived, was still trembling. There was

something in this which I was—so far—unable to fathom.

"Go and bring me some rum and two tumblers, Herman," I ordered, still forcing myself to speak gently, calmly. Herman left the room in silence. I sat there waiting for him to come back, intensely puzzled. The bullock, it seemed to me, could wait. By the indications it had been there for a full day or more. The odor was, even here with the door closed, almost unbearable.

Herman returned and set down the rum and the tumblers. I poured out a stiff tot and a smaller one for myself. I drank off my rum and then handed the other tumbler to Herman.

"Drink this, Herman," I ordered him, "and then sit down there. I wish to speak with you very seriously."

Herman gulped the rum, his eyes rolling and, when I had repeated my command, seated himself uneasily on the extreme edge of the chair I had indicated. I looked at him. Fetching and drinking the rum had somewhat helped his agitation. He was no longer visibly trembling.

"Listen to me, now, man," said I. "I beg you to tell me, plainly and without equivocation, why is it that you have not taken that bullock out of the hall. That I must know. Come now, tell me, man!"

Once again Herman literally threw himself at my feet and groveled there. He murmured—

"I is beg yo' to believe, me marster, dat I can not do, sar."

This was too much. I threw my restraint to the winds, caught the black rascal by the neck, hauled him to his feet, shook him soundly, slapped him on both sides of the face. He was unresistant, quite limp in my grasp, poor old fellow.

"You will tell me," I threatened him, "or, by Cæsar, I'll break every bone in your damned worthless black body! Come now, at once and no more of this intolerable stupidity!"

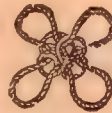
Herman stiffened. He leaned forward, whispered, tremblingly, in my ear. He did not dare, it seemed, to mention the name he had on his tongue aloud. He

told me that Pap' Joseph, their devilish black *papaloi*, as they name him, their witch doctor, had been the cause of the bullock's remaining in the hall. Furthermore, now that he was started on his confession, he told me that my half-brother had had that filthy wretch staying in the house—can you imagine it, Malling?—for several days before his sudden death; that the two had made elaborate arrangements, there in the hall, for some filthy *obeah* which they were planning between them; that the bullock had been introduced three days ago; other detail which would be here superfluous, and, finally, that, as nearly as he—not a witness of whatever necromancy or sorcery they were working among them—there had been various other blacks on the scene in my hall besides those two—could estimate the matter, Otto Andreas had died, very suddenly and unexpectedly, *in the midst of their incantations*, and that Pap' Joseph himself had given him, Herman, the strictest orders not to remove the bullock from the hall upon any pretext whatsoever until he, Pap' Joseph, should come to take the animal away in person. It was to be watered, fed—hence the bucket and the trough of green food—but not otherwise to be interfered with in any manner whatsoever.

That, of course, explained much; but knowing why poor old Herman had balked at answering my previous questions did not help the affair very greatly. The disgusting creature was still, as it were, pastured in my hall. It was inexplicable—why the witch doctor had issued such ridiculous orders; I mean to say, because to understand that, one would have to be familiar with the inner workings of their incantations and similar stupidity. However, I saw clearly that Herman could not, being under such pressure of fear—they all dread this Joseph like pestilence or the Evil Fiend himself—do anything by way of removing the animal. I sent him out, and stepped along the gallery and again into the hall.

Here, for the first time, I perceived what my complete stultification upon

seeing that bullock calmly occupying my hall on my first visit had prevented my noticing before. At the east end of the hall, a large, strong platform of boards, approached from the side by a ramp or inclined plane, had been solidly built against the wall, at the same height as the marble mantelshelf. Indeed, the platform, which was about twelve feet square, was an extension into the room of the mantelshelf itself. I knew, and you know, of course, what that had involved. The platform was a "high" altar of voodoo. Some very elaborate rites of the higher manifestations of their horrible practises had been planned here. I was dry mouthed with pure indignation. The son of my father, Fergus Gannett, even by a person of color, lending himself to that, taking willing part in such atrocious villainy!



I SAW that I should have to secure a rope to remove the bullock, which was entirely free, and now standing looking out of one of the windows without so much as a halter on its head. I walked out of the room, closing the door behind me, and as I was about to call to Herman to fetch me a rope it occurred to me that I would do well to procure some help. I could not, you see, lead such an animal out of my house on to the public road. It would be a most ridiculous sight and would mark me for years as a subject for derisive conversation among the blacks of the town, indeed of the entire island. I called to Herman, therefore, but when he came in answer to this summons I demanded, not a rope, but the carriage and, when that appeared ten minutes later, I ordered Herman to drive me out to Maccartney House.

Yes, I had made up my mind, even to the extent of taking Maccartney some ways into my confidence, that I would do wisely to have him along. For one thing, he has many cattle. Maccartney handing over a bullock—it could be led out through a back passage and into the house yard—over to one of his farm laborers would

not excite any comment at all in the town.

I thought better and better of this decision during the ten minute drive to Maccartney's, and when I arrived I found him at home and Cornelis Hansen, his son-in-law, who married Honoria, with him.

I explained no more to these gentlemen than that my eccentric late half-brother had seen fit to leave an animal in the hall shortly before his death, and that I begged their aid and countenance in getting rid of the beast, and they both came back with me.

It was close upon three o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived, Maccartney having brought one of his cattlemen who sat beside Herman on the box, and, taking this fellow with us, equipped with a rope and bull halter, we entered the house and walked along the inner gallery and into the hall.

Here, then, my dear Mallings, I am constrained to set down the oddest happening! The bullock, which was a young one, only half grown, was not, as it turned out, the docile, placid creature one might very well have expected.

To put the matter briefly, so soon as the creature saw us enter, and had, apparently, observed the cattleman with his halter and rope, it began to act as though it were positively possessed! It raged about the room, upsetting what furniture was there, breaking some articles, overturning others, the cattleman in hot pursuit; Maccartney, Mr. Hansen and I doing our best to hem it in and head it off. Finally it took refuge, of all imaginable places, upon the board platform! Yes, it ran up the ramp and stood, at bay, its muzzle positively frothing, its nostrils distended, and a look of the most extraordinary emotion upon its heavy animal face that any one could—or could not—possibly imagine.

As it stood there, and the three of us and the cattleman stood looking up at it, Maccartney burst out with—

"Faith, Mr. Gannett, sir, it has every appearance of humanity in its confounded eyes—the beast!"

I looked at it and felt that Maccartney might almost be right! The animal had most pronouncedly upon its facial expression every indication of unwillingness to be removed from my hall! The thing was entirely ridiculous, save only that its rushing about was going to cost me a pretty penny for the joiner's work which must be done upon my broken furniture.

Maccartney ordered his negro to mount the ramp and place the halter upon the now apparently cornered beast, and he attempted to do so. He had got nearly to the top when the beast unexpectedly lowered its head and hurled the unfortunate man to the floor, breaking one of his arms between the shoulder and elbow.

At this, once more that day, I lost patience entirely. This stupidity, it seemed to me, had gone far enough. Was my half-brother and his witless knavery to follow and distress and annoy me even from beyond his grave? I decided that I would end the affair there and then.

"Attend to your poor fellow, here, Maccartney," said I, "and I will return directly. You might take him out and Herman will drive him to the municipal hospital."

I left the room, walked along the inner gallery to my office, and took my pistol from the drawer of the table where I always keep it.

I came back to the hall, passing Maccartney and Hansen as they carried the poor devil with his broken arm, moaning quite piteously, out to the carriage in the roadway below.

The pistol in my hand, I approached the platform. On it the bullock was still standing. It had made no effort to descend. I walked straight down the room and stood before the platform, raised the pistol, and took careful aim at the middle of the animal's forehead. It was only just as I pressed my index finger firmly around the trigger that I caught the expression in its eyes. Then I understood fully what Maccartney had meant by his remark that it looked almost "human"! If I had had time, I confess to you, Mallings, I would, even

then, and after all that provocation and vexatiousness, have stayed my hand. But it was too late.

The bullet struck squarely in the middle of the beast's forehead and, as it swayed on its stricken legs, a great gout of red blood ran down its soft nose and dripped upon the boards of the platform. Then, quite suddenly, its four legs gave out from under it, and it fell with a round thud on the boards, shaking the solid platform with its considerable weight, and lay still, its head projecting over the edge of the platform.

I left it lying there, the blood running over the edge and dripping on the mahogany flooring of the hall underneath and, as I left the room in the definite certainty that I was finished with this annoyance, all but having the furniture repaired and the stinking shambles cleaned and aired, I carried with me the most extraordinary impression which suddenly grew up in my mind—the most distressful matter imaginable—a feeling which, however illogical the affair may appear to you, I feel certain I shall carry with me to the grave—the feeling that *I had gravely interfered, in some truly mysterious and inexplicable fashion, with my half-brother Otto Andreas's last wishes!*

Maccartney and his son-in-law were returning along the inner gallery from depositing the man in my carriage, and I took them into the dining room for some refreshment, laying the pistol on the table.

"So you shot the beast, eh?" remarked Maccartney.

"Aye," I returned, "and that ends that phase of the trouble, Maccartney. The wine and rum are here on the sideboard; be pleased to take your glasses, gentlemen—only, there is another side to all this on which I wish to consult you both."

We drank a tot of rum and then, the decanter and glasses on the table beside the pistol, we drew up our chairs and I opened to these gentlemen the affair, in confidence—both, as you know, are, like ourselves, members of the Harmonic Lodge in St. Thomas, first placing them

formally on the *****p—of my late half-brother and his bringing the witch-doctor into my house for their infernal devilry, whatever it may have been.

Both, as soon as I had made this affair clear, were of one mind with me. This, in truth, was a matter for swift and very definite action. We must take into our joint confidence the Policemaster—our brother Freemason, fortunately—Knudsen.

We wasted no time, once we had come to that conclusion. I excused myself, leaving these gentlemen to their glasses and the decanter and, taking the pistol, which I returned to its drawer, entered my office and wrote a brief note to Policemaster Knudsen and dispatched Marianna with it to the Christiansfort.

Knudsen arrived in response to this summons just at four, and we sat down to a dish of tea in the dining room to discuss the matter. Knudsen agreed with us fully. He would send out a pair of his *gendarmes* at once, apprehend Pap' Joseph, lodge him in the fort safely, and bring him here to the scene of this last crime of his at nine o'clock that evening. Maccartney and Hansen promised to be here at that hour, and Herman, who had returned from the hospital, drove them back to Maccartney House.



KNUDSEN and his prisoner—handcuffed fast between two *gendarmes* who sat with him in the lower gallery on three adjacent chairs from 8:45 until the punctual arrival of Maccartney and Hansen on the stroke of 9:00—were the first to arrive. Knudsen and I sat together in my office waiting for the other two men in the interim. Knudsen had a glass or two of rum, but I excused myself from joining him in this refreshment.

Upon the arrival of Maccartney and his son-in-law Cornelis Hansen, we dismissed the *gendarmes*, Knudsen instructing them to wait at the farther end of the inner gallery, and took the prisoner into the office where he was provided with a chair. We sat around and looked at him.

This man, rather small and very black, was decently clothed and, except for an extremely villainous expression about the eyes, looked commonplace enough. Yet a mere word of direction from him into the ear of my butler had caused that faithful old servitor of our family for more than thirty years utterly to refuse to obey my orders and dispose of the filthy beast stabled in my hall!

I had sent all the servants home, not even retaining Herman. We had thus the entire house to ourselves. Knudsen nodded to me as soon as we had bestowed ourselves, and I addressed the witch doctor.

"Joseph," said I, "we know that you were here in this house with Mr. Otto Andreas, and that you used my hall for some of your incantations. This, of course, places you outside the law on several counts. The code forbids the practise of *obeah* in the Danish West Indies, and you were, plainly, breaking that law. Also, since you have been doing so here in my house, I am concerned in the matter. I have talked the affair over with these gentlemen and, I will be frank with you, there is some of it which we fail to understand; in particular why I discovered a beast stabled in my residence which, as I understand it, is some of your doings. We have brought you here, therefore, to hear your story. If you will reply clearly and fully to what we desire to ask of you, Herr Knudsen assures me that you will not be thrown into gaol in the fort, nor prosecuted. If you refuse, then the law shall take its course in this case.

"I ask you, therefore, to explain to us, fully, what this animal was doing in my hall; also what part Mr. Otto Andreas had in the affair. Those are the two matters on which we desire to have the fullest information."

Malling, this black fellow simply refused to speak. Nothing, not a word, not a syllable, could we get out of him. Maccartney tried him, Mr. Hansen spoke to him; finally Knudsen, who had waited without saying anything, put in his word.

"If you refuse to reply to the two ques-

tions," said he, "I shall take steps to make you speak."

That was all. It occupied, in all, more than half an hour. At any rate, my watch showed it nearly a quarter before ten when we paused, and Maccartney and Hansen and I looked at each other, baffled; Apparently we could get no satisfaction out of this wretch. Then, in the pause which had ensued, Knudsen, the police-master, addressed me:

"Have I your permission to send my men into your kitchen?" he asked in his curt manner. I bowed. "Anything you desire, Herr Knudsen," I replied, and Knudsen rose and walked out into the inner gallery, and through the half open door of the office we could hear him saying something to his *gendarmes*. Then he returned and sat, silently, looking at the black fellow who now, for the first time, appeared somewhat moved. He showed this only by a slight and characteristic rolling of his eyeballs. Otherwise he gave no more sign of communicativeness than he had vouchsafed previously.

We sat thus, waiting, until a few minutes after ten o'clock, Knudsen and the black fellow quite silent, the others of us conversing slightly among ourselves. Then, at eight minutes past ten, one of the *gendarmes* knocked at the door and handed in to Knudsen, who had arisen to open to this summons, a burning charcoal pot and the bayonets from the two men's rifles which had been detached, doubtless by their officer's command. I sensed, at this, something extremely unpleasant. I knew Knudsen's well earned reputation for downrightness. He is, as you are aware, one of those ex-non-commissioned officers of the Danish army who, as a professional handler of men, takes no stupidity from criminals or others with whom his profession causes him to deal.

He set the charcoal pot on the middle of the floor of my office, thrust the two bayonets, points inward, directly within the bed of glowing coals and, turning to the man who had waited at the door, commanded:

"Bring Larsen here, Krafft, and bind

this fellow with his hands behind him and his feet trussed together."

The policeman spoke in Danish which, I suppose, the black fellow did not understand. Yet I could perceive him wince at the words, which plainly had to do with his subsequent treatment, and his dark face took on that grayish shade which is a negro's paling.

Almost at once the two *gendarmes* were at the door again. The fellow addressed as Krafft saluted and said—

"We have no rope, Herr Commandant."

I remembered at that the bull handler's rope which Maccartney's man, when carried out for his trip to the hospital, had left behind him. I recalled it as it lay on the floor near that horrid platform, as I had myself left the room after the destruction of the animal. No one had been in the hall since that time, some seven hours ago.

"Pardon, Herr Knudsen," said I, rising. "If you will send one of these men with me, I will provide him with a rope."

Knudsen spoke to Krafft, who saluted once more and, stepping aside for me to pass out into the inner gallery, followed me a pace behind while I walked along it toward the doorway leading into the hall.

Malling, my friend, I hesitate to go on; yet, go on I must if I am to make it clear to you, after this long rigmarole which I have already, by nearly a whole day's steady composition, succeeded in setting out for your perusal and understanding. I will try to set it down, the dreadful thing, the incredible horror which blasted my sight and will invade my suffering mind until death closes my eyes for the last time on this earth; my real and sufficient reason for leaving this island where I have lived all my life, which I love as my native land, where all my friends live.

Attend, then, friend Malling, to what I must, perforce, set out on this paper, if you are to understand.

I reached the door, throwing it open, which let out upon us more of that wretched odor which was, of course, all through the house despite opened win-

dows. Lighting a match, I set alight the nearest lamp, a standing, brass mounted affair, which stands quite near the doorway beside my mother's Broadwood pianoforte.

By this light we proceeded, the *gendarme* Krafft and I, along the room toward the other end where the platform still stood, where the carcass of the animal hung, its head over the edge, awaiting the very early morning when old Herman, according to my orders, was, with the assistance of two laborers he was to secure, to remove it and set about the cleaning of the room immediately afterward.

Two-thirds of the way along the room I paused and, pointing in the general direction to where it lay, on the mahogany floor, told Krafft that he would find the rope somewhere near the place I indicated. I caught his silent salute with the corner of my eye as I paused to light another standing lamp, since the light from the first, dimmed by its large ornamental shade, left us, at this point, in semidarkness and the mantelpiece and platform above it in thick darkness. I had just turned down the circular wick of this second lamp when I heard Krafft's scream and, dropping the box of matches I held upon the floor, wheeled just in time to see him, his hands above his head in a gesture of abandoned horror, sink limply to the floor not five paces from the front of that platform.

I peered toward him, my eyes for the instant slightly dazzled from having been close to the flame of the newly lighted lamp, and then, Malling—then, my friend, I saw *what he had seen*; what had set this tough grained man handler of a policeman to screaming like a frightened woman, and himself hurtling to the floor in an uncontrollable spasm of stark, unmitigated terror. And as I saw, and felt the room go around, and envisaged the conviction that this was the end of life—as I myself sank, helpless with the fearsome horror of that eldritch uncanniness, toward the floor, the light fading from my consciousness in the onset of a merciful

oblivion, I heard, behind me, the agitated voices of Knudsen and Maccartney and young Mr. Hansen as they, summoned by Krafft's scream, crowded into the hall through the doorway. I had seen, dimly in that not too good illumination from the two standing oil lamps, not the head of the bullock I had destroyed, but—the head and shoulders of my half-brother *Otto Andreas*; a great blackened hole in his forehead; and the blood dried on his inverted face; as he hung, stark now, and ghastly lifeless from over the edge of the voodoo platform . . .



I AWAKENED in my office surrounded by my acquaintances, a drizzle of cold water upon my face and neck, and the taste of brandy in my mouth puckering my lips. I was on my back on the floor and, looking up, I perceived that the *gendarme*, Larsen, stood over the still seated black fellow, his pistol held near the back of the man's head. As I sat up, assisted by young Mr. Hansen, Knudsen turned away from the group and, taking a now glowing bayonet out of the charcoal pot with his gloved hand, curtly ordered Larsen to turn the negro out of his chair and stretch him, bound as I perceived, according to orders, upon the floor.

The anticipation sickened me slightly, and I closed my eyes; but I had determined not to interfere with Knudsen, who knew his own methods and was, after all, here upon my own request to force from this villain the confession which should clear up the mysteries we had vainly propounded to him.

I was soon in my chair, pretty well restored by the vigorous measures which had been taken with me, and able to hear what Knudsen was saying to the supine prisoner. I saw, too, the pale and stricken face of Krafft, just outside the doorway. He too, it appeared, had recovered.

I will abbreviate a very ugly matter, an affair which sickened me to the heart; which was, nevertheless, necessary as procedure if we were to secure the information we desired.

In short, the black fellow, even in his present distressful condition, refused, point blank, to reveal what we had inquired of him, and Knudsen, with his own hand, tore open his shirt and applied the cherry-red bayonet to his skin. A horrid smell of scorched flesh made itself apparent at once, and I closed my eyes, sick at the dreadful sight. The negro screamed with the unbearable pain, but thereafter clamped his thick lips and shook his head against Knudsen's repeated orders to answer the questions.

Then Knudsen put the bayonet back, thrusting it well into the glowing charcoal, and took out the other one. He stood with it in his hand above the negro. He addressed him, in his usual curt, cold and hard tones:

"My man, I warn you seriously. I make you sensible that you will not leave this house alive. I shall go over your entire body, with these, unless you reply to the questions you have been asked."

With the conclusion of this warning speech, he abruptly pressed the flat of the bayonet across the negro's abdomen, and after an anguished howl of pain, Pap' Joseph capitulated. He nodded his head and writhed out of twisted lips his consent.

He was at once lifted back into the chair by the two *gendarmes*, and then, gasping, his eyes rolling in a mental anguish plainly greater than that of his grievous bodily hurts, he told us . . .

It appears that there are two "supreme offerings" in the dreadful worship of these voodooists; one the affair of a human sacrifice which they name "the goat without horns", and which, according to our informant, was never put into practise in these islands; and the second, their ceremony which they call the "baptism". This last, it was, which had been perpetrated in my house! And—one could hardly guess it, even at this stage of this narrative of mine for your private eye, friend Malling—it was *Otto Andreas* who was the candidate!

I should, perhaps, have mentioned that his body, supposedly buried a day and a

half before, and which had, to my distraction and that of the man Krafft, been seen hanging over the edge of the sacrificial platform, had been taken down and now lay, decently disposed by Knudsen and Larsen along four chairs in the hall during the short period when Maccartney and Hansen had been engaged in reviving me and bringing me back to my office. Earth and splinters of pitch pine were upon the body.

The culmination of that foul rite which they impiously call the baptism is the sacrifice of an animal; sometimes a goat, sometimes a young bull. In this case the bull had been selected.

Before the knife is drawn across the throat of the animal, however, the candidate for the baptism, on hands and knees, and stripped naked as the hour he was born, must "confront" the goat or the bull. Yes, Malling, as I gathered it from those twisted, pain galled lips of that black fiend, the two, the candidate and the sacrificial animal, gaze for a long period into each other's eyes; the belief being that in this way the two, for the time being, exchange, as it were, their personalities! It seems incredible that it should be believed, yet such is what he assured us of.

In the ordinary course, the officiating priest having determined that this alleged exchange of personalities has indeed taken place, the animal is abruptly killed, its throat being cut across with a sharpened machete or cane-bill. At this, the personality of the human being retransfers itself to its proper abode; yet, some modicum of it is supposed to remain in the animal, and this, on the animal's death, passes out of it and into the custody of the thing they name the Guinea Snake, which is the ultimate object of their nefarious devotions, as a sacrifice, given up by the candidate thereto.

Such, as it was explained to us, is the underlying principle of a voodooist's baptism.

That is how it would have occurred in the case of Otto Andreas, if there had not been a kind of unexpected hitch. Natu-

rally, one would gather, the nervous and mental strain upon such a candidate would be an extremely severe one. In the case of my half-brother it proved too severe.

Otto Andreas had dropped dead, doubtless from heart failure induced by the strain of it all, there on the platform, just at the very moment before Pap' Joseph himself, as he assured us, who was officiating at the baptism, was to slaughter the bull.

The personalities, as the voodooists believed, were at that moment entirely interchanged. In other words, lacking the release and relocation of these, which would have come at the knife stroke across the bullock's throat, the "soul" of the sacrificial animal died at the moment of Otto Andreas' unexpected death, and—the *soul of Otto Andreas remained in the bullock.*

"An' so, sar," finished Pap' Joseph, with a devilish leer in his eyes, and addressing me, "yo' is destroy the life of yo' bruddah, sar, when yo' is so hasty as to shoot de bull!"

The witch doctor, it transpired from a portion of his account, had given old Herman the orders—not knowing of my imminent return home—to keep the bullock in the hall, because he was "making magic" to get the "souls" exchanged back again! It had, of course, been necessary to bury Otto Andreas' body. But, we were assured, if the bullock had been left alone, it would, by now, have been changed back into Otto Andreas, a process which, the witch doctor gravely assured us, required not only a great skill in magicking like his own, but considerable time!

There was only one thing to be done that night. Pap' Joseph was sent back to the Christiansfort, with instructions that he was to be liberated the following morning at six o'clock. Then the four of us, having placed a blanket about the body of Otto Andreas, carried it among us to the cemetery. Arrived there, with the two spades we had fetched along, Hansen and Knudsen set to work to dig up the coffin.

It was moonlight and, of course, at that hour of the night no one was in or even near the cemetery.

The earth, even for a newly made grave, was unusually loose, it seemed to all of us. A spade struck wood, about four feet down. Maccartney spelled his son-in-law. I offered to do the same for Knudsen, but he refused. Within a minute he said in a puzzled tone—

“What is this!”

He squatted down in the grave and with his gloved hands threw up a mass of soft earth about something he had discovered.

Malling, they had disinterred a smashed coffin, a coffin burst out of semblance to the narrow box which is designed to be the last housing place of a human form. And no wonder it had been burst asunder, from the monstrous thing which came partially to light. We did not wholly uncover what we had discovered down there under the surface of the holy ground. There was no need, Malling.

It had been the stiff, unyielding, bony limb of a four legged horned animal, from which Knudsen had thrown up the loose earth. A bullock was buried there, where some thirty-six hours previously men had interred the body of my late half-brother Otto Andreas Gannett. Pap' Joseph, it appeared, under that direful compulsion to which he had so reluctantly yielded, had told us the truth.

We hastily enlarged the grave sufficiently to receive the body we had brought with us and, leaving a higher mound than had met us on our arrival, though beaten down with the flats of the spades, we came back swiftly and in silence to my house and there, as brother Freemasons, swore that, save for this information to you, our fellow brother Freemason, which I specified as an exception, we would none of us—and the others during the term of my life—reveal anything of what we had heard to any man. Knudsen answered for his *gendarmes* and, from the reputation he bears as a disciplinarian, I have little fear that either of them will ever mention what part of it all they were privileged to witness.

This will serve, then, my friend, to account to you for why I am leaving Santa Cruz and going to Scotland whence our family came here four generations ago, when these islands were for the first time opened to the settlement of planters other than natives of Denmark through the generosity of the Danish government. I can not stay in this cursed house where such things as confound man's understanding have taken place; and so I place my property in your kind and efficient hands, my friend Malling, in the belief that I have made my reasons for such a decision clear.

I am taking with me to Scotland my faithful old servant Herman. I would not leave him here to endure the tender mercies of that pestiferous scoundrel Pap' Joseph, whose orders/ out of faithfulness to me, he broke. One can not tell what would happen to the poor old fellow if I were so inconsiderate.

I remain, yours most faithfully and to command,

—ANGUS GANNETT

P.S. Knudsen, of course, insists that some blacks, followers of Pap' Joseph, merely exchanged the bodies of the bullock and my half-brother, during the interval, after my shooting of the beast, in which my hall remained unvisited by any of my household. —A. G.

III

I FINISHED the account and handed it back to Herr Malling. I thanked him for his extraordinary courtesy in allowing me to read it. And then I walked straight to Gannett House to look once more at that hall where all this mysterious succession of strange affairs had taken place. I sat down, after Robertson had let me in, in the place usually occupied by Mrs. Garde, and Robertson brought me a solitary tea on the great circular tray.

I could not forbear glancing up toward the place once occupied by that board platform where a voodoo baptism had all

but taken place; a strange rite interrupted just before its culmination by the collapse of long dead and gone Otto Andreas, with his unquenchable desire for the fellowship of the Snake! There are strange matters in our West Indies. Well, God was, always had been, always will be, stronger than the Snake. There would be, I felt well assured, no recurrence of that strange vision which had projected itself after all these years, of that bullock's "almost human" eyes, reproachful, pathetic, as Mrs. Garde had said, looking down at the grim Scot with his steady hand leveling his great horse pistol at the point between those eyes . . .

Mrs. Garde returned to her hired house infinitely refreshed by her sea voyage, her mind occupied with other affairs than the horror of the wall near the portrait of her late husband.

There was, as I had anticipated, no recurrence of the phenomenon:

Naturally, Mrs. Garde was solicitous to inquire what I had done to remove the

appearance which had done so much to destroy her comfort and happiness, but I was loath to explain the matter to her, and managed never to do so. Perhaps her splendid gentility sensed that I did not wish to offer her explanations. Mrs. Garde was a Boston Unitarian, and Boston Unitarians are apt to take things on an intellectual basis. Such are not likely to be sympathetically familiar with such other-worldly affairs as the exorcism of a house, routine affair as it had been to good Fr. Richardson.

Besides, I have no doubt, Mrs. Garde was so pleased at the non-recurrence of the old annoyance, that she probably attributed it to something popularly called "eye strain." There was nothing to remind her of that bloody faced, pathetic eyed bullock, drooping to its final fall. Otto Andreas Gannett was not even a memory in Christiansted. We had many delightful tea parties, and several evening dances, in that magnificent hall of Gannett House that Winter in Christiansted . . .



IF THERE

Concluding

A Novel of the South Seas

WHEN Hurricane Williams, notorious South Sea adventurer, escaped from the renegade Captain Hazard's schooner and swam ashore to the Island of Karnu, Red Ghorlan took him into his house and permitted Raccla, his beautiful daughter, to nurse the hunted man back to health. Ghorlan refused to allow Hazard to take Williams into Sydney for the reward the King had posted, for Ghorlan, too, had his secret: he was really the Colonel Henry Morland who, years before, had led a band of Chinese sailors in the looting and scuttling of the ship *Anne of Southern*.

While convalescing, Williams one day met old Lydia, the half demented woman who had been the companion of Ghorlan's dead wife. The old woman hated Ghorlan and she told Williams the story of the *Anne of Southern*, of the wealth buried beneath the house; and besought him to avenge the crime.

Williams did not speak of Lydia to Ghorlan; as soon as he recovered he made off in the schooner of the planter Hale, a friend of the rascally Hazard, who lived across the lagoon from Ghorlan. Williams freed his black sailors who had been enslaved by Hale, and made for the Island of Waklea, where he was joined by Brundage and Francisco, his lieutenants.



The King's gunboat *Astar* had got wind of Williams' rendezvous and, suddenly putting in to Waklea, forced him to flee over the mountains. In the running fight that ensued Francisco was wounded and captured by the British sailors; but Williams and Brundage got away.

Meanwhile on Karnu, one of the many letters which old Lydia, unknown to Ghorlan, had tried to smuggle out by passing ships, telling of the *Anne of Southern* affair, had borne fruit. A schooner put in to the Island, discharging four people—three men and a woman. The woman, Louise, told Ghorlan they knew his secret; that he would be exposed unless he shared his treasure with them. But before they had had time to act, the gunboat *Astar* appeared.

BE COURAGE

By

GORDON
YOUNG



Friends of Ghorlan, the officers of the boat came ashore, bringing with them the outlaw, Francisco. The latter managed to make his escape from Ghorlan's veranda and the British, thinking he would cross the Island to join Williams, set out to cut him off—while Francisco calmly waited in an upstairs room . . .

Before the *Astar* was fairly out of sight, Raccla came running with word that old Lydia was dead—but that went almost unnoticed in view of the fact that Hazard's schooner was seen in the lagoon, discharging some ten ruffians. Hazard swaggered insolently up.

"I allus knew there was somethin' funny about you, Ghorlan; an' when Mr. Crespham here—" he jerked a dirty thumb at the only decently dressed mem-

ber of the party—"come to me with a letter from his Aunt Lydia—"

Wick, Hazard's mate, broke in savagely: "Damn the aunt! Ghorlan, where's that treasure?"

ENCOURAGEMENT was yelled at Wick. Hazard pressed to the side of his mate and shook his fist in Ghorlan's face. One called Red began to pick at the remains of the breakfast, shelled a hard boiled egg as he watched Ghorlan and popped the egg whole into his mouth.

"Onct I wanted to be friends with you," Hazard said reproachfully. "You was too much stuck up. I warned you!" Hazard shook his fist as if to strike, but Red's palm came up with a contemptuous push into Hazard's face.

"Shut up. Me, I'll talk. I'm Red O'Larg, and I'll tear your heart out an' ram it down your throat if—"

"That's the way to talk!"

"Red'll fix 'im!"

Hot, eager words bubbled out of their throats in confused excitement; the words hummed with menace.

"Pop Hazard, he's cap'n, Mista O'Larg," said a shiny negro, Hazard's recruiter. "Hit is foh him ter—"

Red answered obscenely with a lift of arm seaward.

"Captain o' the *Langley*. We're ashore, now. Hazard, you talk too much. Men—" Red appealed to the encircling group of faces—"who you goin' choose to—"

"Look!" a tall man yelled, pointing.

He cried out in the tone, his eyes had the look, of one who was not sure that what he seemed to see were so. The others looked; all of them. Ghorlan, too.

In the misty shadows of the hall, peering in frightened fascination through the flimsy netting, stood women—young, pretty, helpless. They, trembling in curiosity and uneasiness, had crept there to see; and being unnoticed drew nearer and nearer—like watchers in a tragedy, fascinated by the evil of what they saw, held spellbound.

Hazard's square jawed mate, playing the game of capture and being nearest, struck through the netting as if it were a spider's web, clutched Lele and jerked. Her weight was unexpectedly light, and with backward stumbling he drew her through the ripped netting, backing up, holding her with a hand to her wrist, an arm at her waist.

In the instant's confusion of other men's surging at the doorway, eager too for the feel of a woman's struggles, Hazard caught at Wick's arm. Hazard, a ready man with words, seeing what prize his mate had caught, bawled:

"That's no way to do. Let go o' her."

"Go to hell!" said Wick, jeering, not angered. "That's how you got the Danger Island girl away from me that time. Said it was wrong to take her—then took 'er yourself."

In the stormy, half gleeful tumult none heard the blast of a curse, too rageful to take shape in words, that with growling hoarseness rolled up from far down in Ghorlan's throat.

And even as Lele was drawn through the ripped netting, Red the powerful and Black Peter the recruiter rushed in together and each gripped a woman's dress. Louise screamed. The two men, half blocking the doorway, each tugging at Louise, cursed the other, waved fists and with gleam of teeth snarled like wolfish dogs over a bone. Louise screamed again and again, hurt by the grip and pull of their hard fingers, terribly frightened by the fierceness of their faces.

With a lunge Red whipped up a knife and Black Peter let go, stumbling away, flashing curses. Red laughed in half pleased anger and sheathed the knife with an unconscious gesture as he drew Louise to one side. A sidelong blow came into Red's face. Crespham hit him with a white, unhardened fist, striking with instinctive gallantry and a gentleman's courage.

Red cursed him with a sneer, having no fear of this English weakling; spat words of vicious threat, then drew up his arm in hovering menace but Crespham stood erect, too angry to be frightened. Red struck, and as he struck Louise, with the strength of panic, jerked and was free, but half fell. Red turned to snatch again at her, but Crespham, though hit full in the face, came back dizzily and with groping clutch struggled.

Louise caught up her skirts and ran unpursued round the veranda, to the rear of the house, up the path, and on and on, blindly, until out of breath and seeing that she was not followed she sank down, gasping.

She was forgotten in the confusion, for even as Red seized upon Crespham to beat him to death there were howls, yells, the explosive burst of gunfire.

As Louise had been jerked through the doorway by the arms of the negro and Red O'Larg, each cursing the other, the great wide door had been swung shut with

heavy force, banging heads and smashing fingers in its jamb. Yelps that rang with pain went up. Shoulders bucked the door. Men had seen indistinctly in the depth of the hall's dimness another woman. They thought—there was nothing else to think—that she had sent the door to; and that now it was held by only a girl's strength.

Shoulders struck against it with confused struggling; and again and again the door was forced half open, only to come back with wind blown force. Then, unexpectedly, the door swung wide, and Francisco shot, pointblank.

Raccla, running on the stairs, going as he had told her to go, paused to look down.

Francisco swore with rippling oaths in a strange tongue, shooting.

A musket roared through the doorway with blinding spurt of smoke; then another, and Francisco swayed back, stumbled, turned with blind groping and went to his knees. He arose as if struggling and drunkenly fumbled for the stairs. The hall was densely filled with smoke that shifted on the slow breath of a draft out of the doorway, filling the eyes of men that peered, hopeful that Francisco was dead, but afraid to rush in. Other muskets were pointed through the doorway, and fired aimlessly.

Raccla faced about on the stairs and, as if in a fog, saw Francisco staggering. She sprang down the stairs, caught at him, trying to help. He said something that she did not understand and pushed his arm against her. Then, understanding, she took the big revolver. It was heavy and awkward in her small hand. He, with both hands pulling at the banister, struggled up.

"Ha," he muttered, brushing at his eyes with a forearm. "Eet is ze smoke. Now I see—queek."

His hand went out as if striking at her, fumbled for the gun and took it from her fingers with a wrench that hurt. With a lurch as if about to fall over the banisters he fired toward the doorway where dimly seen faces peered.

Raccla pulled at his shoulder, urging him to climb, and begged—

"Francisco, come!"

He yielded to her frantic tugs but kept the gun. At the top of the stairs he stopped, pulled back, reeling, seemed about to fall headlong but lay half over the banister railing, listening. He could hear indistinct sounds. There was the stormy trample of feet, indistinct voices that seemed far off, now and then shrill cries. He shook his head as a man does when he would shake off drowsiness and rubbed a forearm across his face.

"A leetle hole," he muttered. "Eet is nothing. Here, you see?" He pulled drunkenly at his shirt, opening it, and his fingers groped about on his bare breast and shoulders, trying to find wounds, wanting to reassure her—perhaps himself, too.

Then, as if out of his head:

"Does Francisco hide? No! I weel go—"

Insanely he meant to go down the stairs. Raccla caught at him, pulled, struggled, begged with rapid pleading. That he could not shake her off was enough to show how weak he was. He leaned weakly against the banister post; then slowly, with head a-droop, he began to sink. His weight bore down his hands. He fell and lay still.

The house, after the sounds of stormy tumult on the veranda, had become strangely quiet. Raccla listened, wondering. She crouched, tense and motionless. Then vaguely from the depths of the house there came the hurrying, confused sounds of hasty pillage, the clink of bottles, patter and shuffling scrape of feet, eager hum of voices. The smoke of the hallway, like a lifting fog, drifted in a thinning mist. Raccla saw an ugly, sun blackened face leering up furtively from the foot of the stairs. She shrank back, then lifted the revolver in both hands, drew back the hammer. The face peered as if fascinated. With an impulsive jerk of her finger she pulled the trigger, and the only sound was the snapping click of the hammer on an empty shell. Raccla dropped the gun and turned, running, toward the open door of her room.

With a derisive laugh Red O'Larg

bounded on the stairs. He and his men, without rivalry, were in control of Ghorlan's house.



WHEN, some fifteen minutes before, Francisco had popped out there in the hall like a devil from a hole in the ground, those who caught a glimpse of his dark face, of the short curly hair, and the blaze of light in his eyes, swayed back in amazed pause. Expecting merely a girl, they saw a man who cursed them in strange oaths and fired pointblank.

Hazard, with a backward jerk of his head, had turned and snatched at a musket. Another man did the same. Hastily pointing their guns into the doorway, they fired, filling the hall with smoke.

"I got 'im!" Hazard shouted, hopeful but not sure.

At the same time in the midst of this commotion Ghorlan, cursing furiously, struggled up out of his chair and swung his body until he was close behind Hazard who, standing well to one side, held the discharged musket in his hand. Wick, close beside him, still held Lele by the wrist.

Ghorlan's crutch fell. His great thick arms swept out. With a roar he jerked Hazard and Wick together, trying to bash their heads, one against the other, and bore down with all his weight.

"Go! Run!" he bellowed to Lele.

She, now free, paused in staring agony. Had he said nothing she might have got off; but as she stood, half poised to run, a young black caught her, jerked her against the wall and grinned savagely as he said:

"I keep you foh boss-man. Big debil kill him so he die, me keep you!"

In the swirl of the fight, Black Peter plunged at Ghorlan; and in a frenzy at finding his strength useless, Peter simply leaned forward and sank his teeth into Ghorlan's arm, like a dog. Ghorlan's arm came free and, though the flesh was torn, he whirled Black Peter up against his massive breast, and held the three of them.

They cried out, struggling, but Ghorlan was upon them, held them furiously, leaned upon them, crushing with muscles and weight. His lips were drawn back as an animal bares its teeth and his breath hissed in labored breathing. Other men rushed at him, pulled, cursed, beat at him, struck at his head with musket butts, and blood ran about his face, but they could not break his hold. The powerful grip of his thick arms was like the snarled bight of a tautened hawser.

Ghorlan, a crippled giant with strength going, heaved his full weight upon them and, with a swaying tug, jerked. Hazard gave way and slipped down. With a squirming twist and kick he struggled among the legs of men that stepped on him until he crawled free. Ghorlan tightened his hold about the bodies of Wick and Peter, heaved up his weight and with a backward reach of his sound leg, he hooked his foot over the veranda railing and jerked with all his strength. And they came up against him helplessly with all their weight; and under all their weight the strong railing gave way with a splintering crack so that they toppled backward in a headlong fall. They struck in a huddled mass thirty feet below.

The jar of the fall broke Ghorlan's hold. Their bodies rolled lifelessly here and there until, lodging against the roots of shrubs, caught and half concealed by vines, they lay motionless.

Hazard, peering down, said with something of the awe of one saved by a miracle—

"An' he almost got me!" He straightened up with hands rubbing at his ribs that seemed half broken. "Who'd 'a' thought with him a cripple that—" But the nearness of the miracle had not changed Hazard. He caught sight of Lele and reached for her, pushing away the black. "To late to run now, chink girl!"

"She no run. I keep 'er," said the black, proudly, wanting reward.

"Please!" Lele pointed downward. "I go see if he live."

"Lives! He's squashed like a bug you've stepped on."

"Maybe he live," Lele insisted.

"No gettin' way from me. An' you'll soon learn to like ol' Hazard better'n him."

Lele drew back, and pulled against his hold as if now for the first time noticing how ugly he was, how unwashed, with discolored and unkempt beard. He was broad and thick, with a bulge to his belly, and his wide mouthed grin showed teeth that looked like bits of old bone.

"What you do with me?" she asked, tremulously.

"Do? Ho, eat you for puddin'. You're sweet enough. I'm cannibal when it comes to women!" He laughed.

A man who had climbed down the hill-side returned, saying:

"All dead as las' year's kippers. An' Wick's somethin' awful. - What's to do now, Cap?"

"Get that Francisco."

"He kill you!" said Lele in a musical, thin voice, strangely lilting for such words.

Hazard jerked her savagely.

"Will, eh?" She began to cry. He shook her. "Shut up!" She sobbed and with broken words—

"I kill you!"

Hazard laughed angrily and raised his arm to strike. "You try it, an' damn me if I don't break ever' bone in your body!"

Lele wept. That angered him. He swore at her, said it was insulting when he was going to be good to her. She continued to weep, but he did not strike. He looked toward Crespham who stood there, weak and pale, dripping with blood from the beating and kicking Red O'Larg had given him.

"What you starin' at?" said Hazard.

"A dog," said Crespham.

Hazard cursed him and turned to call to some man or other. Some of the men had been prowling cautiously through the house and came with hands full of loot. One held silver dishes in his hands, and had silver goblets under his arms.

Hazard looked with greedy understanding at the silver.

"Here, you!" He reached out with a wolfish snatch. "I get first pick o' all this stuff an'—"

"Like hell!" said Red O'Larg; and smashed his fist into Hazard's face.

At that Lele felt her arm free, and she ran with scurrying darts this way and that around the veranda.

Hazard, with a fight on his hands, nevertheless yelled:

"Catch 'er!" A black sailor or two started for her. "Here, you—!" Hazard turned on O'Larg, cursing him.

O'Larg flung up a hand, ready to fight, also ready to explain. He said truculently:

"There ain't no first choice about the pickin's. We pile it all together and divide even. If you don't like it, come on. I'll make you!"

Hazard hesitated. He was not a coward, but all about him frowning faces and ominous growls backed up O'Larg.

"Well, then," he said, "a share for the ship, an' Wick's to me, besides."

O'Larg studied him doubtfully; then:

"That's fair enough. But don't forget I'm runnin' things. Ain't I, fellers?" Shouts went up, approving. "Then come along!" O'Larg urged. "We'll kill that damn dago then clean this house o' ever' thing that's worth a shillin'."

And so with O'Larg leading they went into the hall stealthily and, peering up the stairs, saw Raccla; heard the click of the gun's hammer on an empty shell.

CHAPTER XII

WILLIAMS' WAY

LOUISE escaped blindly into the hills, and when she sank down wearily to rest she would start up, alarmed by any sound. She could see nothing except the bush on all sides, and the thread of a trail seemed to lead up and up into the desolation of the jungle. The thick shadows made her feel that night had almost come; and it was fearful to think of being alone, lost in the jungle at night.

She felt as though she could not stop; she would not turn back; and so went on and on, pushing through the bushes until her face was scratched, hands bleeding, skirts torn, and her feet were swollen and ached as if burned.

She stopped short and screamed: right at a turn in the path before her stood two ferocious savages, with rifles held waist-high, peering at her. They had heard her coming and waited.

"Who you?" one asked, so gutturally that even those simple words were hardly intelligible.

Louise flung up her hands, turned and started to run; but they bounded at her, caught her, jerked her about. She begged—

"Don't hurt me!" They seemed ferocious.

"You beega fool!" said one of the natives

"Oh," she cried anxiously, "you are Captain Williams' men?"

At that they talked rapidly, and grinned most hideously but as if pleased. They chattered at her, peering expectantly; then suddenly one ran off, disappearing. The other squatted down with an air of patience, and grinned with reassuring clucks. He took a pipe from a straw woven bag that dangled at his waist and smoked, now and then turning his head, seeming almost to lift his ears like a dog that listens.

After about a half hour the man jumped up, ran a few steps, stopped, listened, then looked toward Louise and said something with a confident wagging of his head. And as she watched along the trail she saw the tall, lean figure of Brundage appear.

He came with a long stride and shoulders up, like a man with pride. His was a rasping voice as if from disuse it had grown rusty, and there was a chill calm about him that was like a warning. He seemed a man without passion and without mercy.

"Why are you up here?" he asked.

Louise, with a rush of words, told him; though all she could tell was that strange men had come, and there had been a fight. No, they were not sailors off the *Astar*. As she ran she had heard the sound of guns behind her. These men had snatched at the women, seizing them. She had escaped because one of the men had fought for her, like a gentleman.

Brundage, staring grimly, listened without answer, as if distrustful. His one question was—

"And Francisco?"

Louise shook her head. She did not know. But there had been the sound of guns, and loud yells.

"Umm," said Brundage.

He stood as if waiting, listening. Presently, with a gesture, he seemed to tell her to sit down as if the wait might be long.

She sat down, gazing at him uneasily, somehow not reassured. Suddenly with a blurting lack of forethought she asked—

"Where is Joe Boone?"

Brundage eyed her as if he did not mean to answer, then without emphasis and without interest he said, "Dead," and absently put a lean hand to the cutlass at his side.

Williams came with his blacks at his heels, and at the sight of him Louise rose up impulsively. He stopped before her, stood rigidly, somehow like a man with muscles tense for a sudden leap. His eyes were piercingly direct in an unwinking stare.

She, under pressure of his rapid, abrupt questions, told how she, Raccla, Lele, had heard the sound of voices and tramp of feet, and with no thought of fear had come down curiously, half expecting, or at least greatly hoping, that he, Williams, had returned. But the voices were angry. These men too knew of Ghorlan's supposed treasure; one was the nephew to whom old Lydia had written—it was he who had struck in Louise's defense.

"The men—who brought them?"

Louise shook her head; then, remembering, with startled eagerness said—

"Oh—Lele said one was a Captain Hazard."

"Francisco?"

"I don't know, Captain Williams. I did not see him."

Williams shifted his glance to Brundage and Brundage looked back with eyes narrowed. He nodded slightly. It was as if they could communicate without speaking; but Brundage said in a low, hard tone, nodding again—

"If it's Hazard, they've killed him."

Then other words followed—quick, broken phrases. Louise, listening intently, understood that the *Astar* had been sighted, cruising on the other side of the island. Williams and his men had waited in the hills, not venturing to their schooner until the gunboat had passed the harbor where it lay.

Blacks had been put on the trails as sentinels lest pursuers from the plantation come, or natives from the lagoon village wander up. She had met with two of these guards.

Williams again looked at her for a moment. He said something in the native tongue. At that, a huge black reached out for her and Louise shrank back. Barai stopped short, grinning helplessly.

Williams said, and his voice without being kindly was reassuring:

"You've nothing to fear. He will carry you, that's all."

Louise gasped, relieved. She was still reluctant, even uneasy. Barai was such a big, ugly creature, glistening with sweat and oil. But she was so worn and weary that she felt she could not much longer stand. With a restrained, half instinctive gesture of protest, she let Barai take hold of her. He stooped, lifting her like a child, held her as easily as if she were a baby.

Williams turned with a hard look, not a thing on his face or in his eyes to show what was in his mind as he asked:

"You heard him say—" a pause, and somehow she knew then of whom Williams was speaking, as if his very thoughts could strike, be understood, almost as plainly as words—"you heard him say he wanted no share in stolen wealth?"

She replied over Barai's shoulder:

"He did say just that, and meant it. I know he meant it." With awakening memory and hurried words, and a kind of defensive commendation (as if she knew that Williams' very next question would be, "Why did he come with Hazard?") she repeated what she had overheard, telling that Hazard had stealthily read Crespham's letter at sea and turned back

to Sydney on some pretext or other and gathered men of a type and kind needed to raid Karnu.



AS THEY neared Ghorlan's house they could dimly hear voices that rose with unmusical singing and loud shouts, as if the raiders were drunkenly praising themselves for victory.

Williams and some of the blacks went on around the house, leaving Brundage at the rear.

Brundage drew his cutlass and absently touched the edge with his thumb. Facing the blacks, who grinned with eager leers, wanting the smell of blood, he said calmly—

"The one of you who takes a drink in this house, I'll kill."

The cutlass fell with a downward stroke, symbolically. Brundage eyed them coldly, driving home the warning with a confirming glance.

Walking softly, Brundage entered the kitchen, the blacks at his heels. There lay a body, outflung as if tossed away after murder. The man was drunk. Brundage gazed at him, listening. No sailor, this fellow, with high boots and soil stained trousers stuffed inside. A white workman, overseer from the plantation across the lagoon.

Listening, it seemed to Brundage that the noise of revelry was coming as dimly as if through closed doors from the front of the house. All about—with food scattered and dishes broken, cupboards, boxes, drawers emptied—were the signs of wasteful pillage.

Brundage went on, quietly, with a backward sweep of the cutlass holding the blacks in check.

Williams, from the rear of the house, had thought that the men were at the front; but as he rounded the veranda it seemed as if the singing and shouting, somehow muffled, came from the rear.

On the front veranda only three or four men were sitting at a table, bottles in hand, heads bobbing tipsily, and they talked altogether, not joyfully, but an-

grily. None paid attention to what another said. They were all from the plantation.

Williams appeared—did not pause, but with a rush and a bound was upon them, followed by the blacks; and the men were knocked over and scattered like ninepins, groveling drunkenly under the menace of the blacks who would have killed but for the quick defensive blows that Williams struck at leveled muskets, and sharp words. The overseers were almost too drunken to know what was happening.

Williams, listening to sounds that came with the roar of unmusical singing from within the house, eyed the bleary, staring men; then hastily he clutched one by the collar and arm, and stood him up; pushed him against a wall to give his unsteady legs support.

"Where's Ghorlan?"

The question, the tone of it, something in the ferocious gleam of Williams' eyes struck through the fellow's befuddlement; and with a drunken weave he pointed vaguely toward the shattered veranda railing. His tongue was thick with wine, but Williams understood.

"Francisco?"

The one word was a complete question, emphatic as a threat, not loud but like the crack of a whip.

The fellow rolled his eyes and tried to point overhead.

"'S dead, too. Killed zome of 'em. We—" he, with a loose wrist, tapped his breast—"gen'men. Yessiran' wouldn't—"

"Hale here?"

The fellow tried to be articulate. He did not seem to realize who had hold of him. He shook his head and, with a laborious twist of his lips, cursed.

Williams shook him—to clear his head, and succeeded in learning that Hale was not even on Karnu at present. Natives had paddled across and told that Francisco had escaped, Williams was here, and a boatload of the workmen had come to search. They found the sailors looting the house, drunkenly. Ghorlan was dead, so they joined in the drinking too.

"The women?"

"'At's just it—women!" The drunken man shook his head stubbornly.

Barai, sent by Brundage, came through the house, bowing his tall head at the doorway, and saying the men were holding drunken revel in the cellar.

At that the fellow with blubbing earnestness, still drunkenly but with more coherence, told with jumbled words that he and his companions here on the veranda would not join with the sailors in the cellar, where with unlimited wine at hand, they gambled for a girl.

Williams turned him loose. The man, with sagging knees, took an aimless step, reached for a chair, missed it, fell and struggled fumblingly. His head was turned back in staring fright at the giant Barai whom he, at the whipping post, had lashed; and now he thought to be repaid with death. Barai, with belated recognition, jumped at him with musket set for murder. Williams wrenched the gun from the giant savage's grip, saying in the native tongue—

"He has bought his life with honest words!"

Barai growled but yielded. He did not understand, was never to understand, why Williams spared these men. They were put, almost piled, into a corner of the veranda. Their guns were taken up. A black was left to guard them. Then Williams entered the house, followed by Barai.

Brundage, revolver in one hand, his cutlass in the other, stood well back beside the door opening to the steep steps that led down into the cellar. With no more excitement in manner or voice than if this were a sort of drill, often repeated, he pointed in calm contempt at the huddled shape of a man who rolled his eyes and gaped fearfully.

"Mess of 'em down there," said Brundage. "This fellow came staggering up just now. We grabbed him. They don't know yet we're here."

The fellow stuttered drunkenly, at once guiltily putting the blame on others—

"Red O'Larg—'twas 'im!"

"The girls are there?"

"Y-yes. One of 'em. Red claimed 'er but fellers said—they're dealin' cards—"

"Raccla?"

"Ol' Ghorlan's girl, she is."

"Lele?"

"Who?"

"The other girl."

"You mean the chink girl, mister? She got away. Run fr'm ol' Hazard."

"And Hazard? He there?"

"No, he ain't. I don't know where—killed, maybe. I ain't seen 'im—"

Williams turned to Brundage.

"Stay here. Keep them—" he meant the blacks that hovered like dogs on leash with game in sight—"until you hear fighting. I'm going down alone."

"Not much you're not," said Brundage with stubborn calmness. He, in all their years together, had never opposed even solicitously, as now, anything that Williams said; but this seemed too much like utter, useless madness. "One jump below, all of us, and in short work we'll have it over with. These blacks would follow you to hell, and fight like devils. Don't you trust them, or me?"

Williams answered in a low, quick tone, impatiently explaining. His manner was always tense and hurried as if wasting time when he must explain.

"Like devils, yes. They shoot blindly. And Raccla's there. I want her safe. Then spare no man that's raised a hand to her, or Lele. If we go down all together, before a word is spoken, there'll be a fight. But I, alone—one man alone— Why make me explain what you ought to see? They'll be surprised, but wait, watch, maybe talk. Somehow I'll get her safe—"

Williams pushed by him; and, his knife still in its sheath, revolver in holster, walked quickly, lightly, two steps at a time down into the great, wide, half empty cellar.



THE MEN had run through the house, gathering loot. Each thievishly crammed small objects into his own pockets and threw the rest into a common heap on the veranda, from where, in blanket bundles,

it had been taken by Hazard's native sailors to the ship.

Hazard, keeping faith with no man, meant to pick it over and sequester secretly for himself whatever was most valuable.

The men had readily forgotten all about other loot when they went into the cellar. Finding liquor, they stayed in the lamp-light, drinking greedily, and had brought down Raccla. Her beauty was like a flame that burned them.

And so some dozen of them, guzzling wine and stronger drink, stood, knelt and squatted in a semicircle on the floor, backs to the stairs. Some leaned forward intently, some chattered with boisterous jokes, none too clean of mouth; a few sang drunkenly.

There was a lantern overhead, and a lamp on the small empty iron bound box near a bareheaded man who, knees down, dealt cards. Yet some were noisily inattentive to the game, as if strong drink, free and plentiful, was more of a prize than this girl, very like a hurt and frightened child. With a bewildered, frightened look, she sat on a box, where she had been put forcibly and told to stay, threatened with violence if she moved.

Raccla looked into their lighted faces, grotesque in excited evilness. She felt the chill ache of terror, and could not understand why these men seemed to hate her; yet she would have been even more terrified had she clearly understood that it was not hate. She trembled, shivering as if half frozen, and felt all choked and bruised, as if somehow being hurt by unseen hands.

She, facing toward the steps with head lifted, vaguely saw a shadowy shape come down. Many men had been about the house, coming, going, half aimlessly searching for food or loot; and this might be one who came late into the cellar for his chance in the fateful game of cards. But there was no drunken lurch in the movement of this man, so dimly seen that he seemed but a blur of deeper darkness in the shadows. The light was on her face, in her eyes, so she could not see clearly; yet she somehow sensed that he was not as the

others, and she watched staringly—so staringly that some of the men saw the look and turned. They saw only a moving shadow that, keeping well beyond the downward ray of the suspended lantern, passed encirclingly about the huddled group before the cards.

As the cards were dealt, those who got deuces lost their chance and moved, or were moved—many being drunkenly stubborn about it—backwards.

Red O'Larg, with thick and not skilful fingers, shuffled, mixing the cards in a way that showed their faces, and watched intently. He was not clever but determined, and those who looked on were half drunken, hazy eyed, so that O'Larg, using a wet forefinger, pulled his own draw from the bottom, making sure it was no deuce. He meant to win; and, if necessary, fiercely maintain his cheating with his knife.

When the game had sifted down to himself and a scrubby young ruffian, vicious and loud of mouth, Red O'Larg said truculently:

"Now jus' you an' me. First card an' high man wins."

"Let me cut 'em."

"What you mean by that?"

"What I said."

"You think I'd cheat?" O'Larg bel-
lowed.

"You'd better not!"

O'Larg mixed the cards, his face lowered watchfully. The men grew more and more silent. Drunken voices broke off with words half spoken. A husky chantey ended as abruptly as if a hand were clapped to the singer's mouth. The hush became a silence in which the scrape of feet seemed loud, and the clink of a bottle put to the floor noticeable. O'Larg thought that he was intently stared at, and so the more closely watched his cards as he shuffled them, putting a king on the bottom, uneasily stealing furtive peeks to make sure that it was still there. He glanced with a hasty lift of eyes toward those grouped before him and, with a quick touch, loosened the knife in its sheath significantly.

But no one noticed. Men had forgot the cards, the game, the girl. They stared at a mysterious figure that, detaching itself with noiseless steps from the gloom at O'Larg's back, came nearer. He moved without haste, stopped short and stared down at them; then his gaze fastened on the back of O'Larg's bare head.

Raccla arose with a mute gasp of amazement and quick outthrust of arms. Williams did not look toward her, yet seemed to know what she had done, for with a gesture he indicated that she should keep away, and waited, glaring down at the nervously intent O'Larg.

Uneasy eyes peered this way and that as if to make sure the stranger had come alone. He wore a knife and revolver, but his hands were empty. That was like a lack of menace, but somehow menace was there, awesomely greater than glint of steel or drawn gun. They gaped in the hush of mystified bafflement for he seemed to ignore them as if they were shadows, not men. He watched O'Larg.

They thought O'Larg must surely feel the look of that unwinking stare and turn, but O'Larg bent lower, holding the cards close to his body, hiding them. He was determined to deal without the cut—and to win.



HE FLUNG a card face up across from him, then with a quick move laid down a king before himself.

"I win!" he bellowed.

He lifted his eyes to meet what he thought was suspicious watchfulness of men who had seen him cheat.

"I win!" he repeated defiantly, his hand on his knife hilt, staring to meet the eyes of the men before him.

Then he realized that their eyes were not upon him.

O'Larg, with a twist, turned and saw, not a frightened girl, but a bronze bearded face above him—a man who had come in silence; and the unwavering gleam in his eyes had the look that warns a man of death.

Something more than the strangeness of

his coming, alone, in silence, held them. His casual indifference to their numbers was itself like mystery. He seemed even to their half drunken senses an avenger. His lack of fear touched them with troubled wonder; and like one who knows what must come and what will be done he waited, his muscular body poised rigidly, his hands low at his sides.

"Who the hell—!" blustered O'Larg, his first thought being that some drunken companion had come treacherously behind him. Then he saw this was a man he had never seen before. O'Larg's heart seemed to leap into his throat, chokingly. He gaped, and met a gaze that was merciless.

The challenge was so directly at O'Larg that other men felt themselves like spectators, and watched.

O'Larg shifted about, still crouching, with a hand to his knife, wondering that the man before him said nothing and made no move, but stood with empty hands.

"Who the hell are you?" The question came with a quarrelsome scowl.

There was no answer except the watchful silence.

Red O'Larg straightened in a leap, his lips drawn back as if in pain. Hurriedly he struck, lunging with all his strength to make the blow too quick to dodge. Almost quicker than the eye could follow, his arm was knocked aside with a hand that flashed like a fencer's stroke.

The next instant men half arose, as if they could not believe what they saw. Raccla cried out in fear. She shrank back, staring, not understanding what was happening.

With a straight armed thrust, timed to the flicker of a second's shadow, Williams struck to the right and left with both hands open; and one fastened on O'Larg's throat, the other at the same instant struck and held the knife hand.

O'Larg, cheating at cards to win the girl, by winning had drawn death—not merely death, but one of vengeful justice. And O'Larg, by the feel of this strength, this muscular fury that held and made

him helpless, instantly sensed what was coming. He yelped for help, and his half choked shouts started echoes in the dark empty spaces of the wide cellar that were like a mocking chorus of ghostly voices. With his free hand he struck at Williams' head and face. He begged, lied guiltily in saying that he had meant Raccla no harm and would have turned her loose. Ears of stone would have heard as well.

With one hand on O'Larg's throat and the other locked in a crushing grip about the fingers that held the knife so that he could not drop it, Williams, with slow, unhurried pressure that overcame O'Larg's desperate jerking and writhing, bent the arm until the elbow crooked with inward bend. Then against the frantic pull of the struggling man, Williams, with a quick thrust, drove the knife hilt deep into O'Larg's breast and held it there.

And the men about looked on, half stupefied, aghast, to see O'Larg in desperate unwillingness stab himself to death with that same right hand that in another two minutes would have seized upon the girl.

Then Williams threw the body headlong at their feet; and he looked at them sweepingly. The look was so very much as if he were making a choice of whom next to seize that they gave back.

"You are prisoners! Give over, or—" Williams finished with a gesture that pointed downward at the knife hilt in O'Larg's breast.

They answered with vague, confused outcries, one calling to another as to what it could mean. Some reached for weapons. Some staggered back doubtfully. Others ran for the stairs, escaping.

Williams shoved at Raccla, saying, "Down!" and the blaze of two or three muskets swept at him.

Then yells went up and oaths. Men who had rushed for the steps fell back, reeling under the winking thrust and slash of Brundage's cutlass. The blacks came in gleeful rage, stumbling in their eagerness. There was the flash and roar of guns, shrill yells. Discharged muskets

were not reloaded, but used as clubs. There was a whirling thrash of bodies, frantic curses, ringing clink of steel. The lamp went over, mingling the stink of oil with powder; and the darkness of the cellar leaped forward from corners, encircling.

Full under the glow of the lantern Williams crouched watchfully, with one hand back, holding to Raccla who kneeled. He would not leave her. Twice he arose and struck, once with his knife as a sailor rushed him, swinging a musket; and once with open hand as one of his own blacks, charging toward a man who dodged, came behind Williams and would have trampled Raccla.

Brundage, tall and unhurrying, came near Williams and with his cutlass, now dark and dripping, pointed into the deeper shadows where the blacks in frantic eagerness were searching for men that had tried to hide.

"That does it, skipper," he said. "Now what next?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE TAKING OF THE *LANGLEY*

WILLIAMS and Raccla were in the upstairs hallway before her room, bending over Francisco who lay, quite as if dead, on a mattress taken from a bed and thrown on the floor, when there was a wild outburst below on the veranda. The blacks yelped in a way that meant murder; a woman's voice rose in protesting screams. Brundage, with a long, running stride, hurried through the house.

Williams, telling Raccla to stay where she was, jumped down the stairway and out on to the veranda.

There, already, one black with bushy head sliced open, lay face down at Brundage's feet as if groveling; and Brundage, with the edge of the cutlass before Barai's wild face, was warning him back from a man, all covered with dried blood and darkly bruised of face, before whom Louise, for all of her terror, stood defensively.

She was haggard with fear and weariness;

her clothes were bedraggled from wandering on the thorny trail; her loosened dark hair hung about her face, and her face was distorted with terror; yet more courageously than if she were unafraid, she faced the wild blacks who, eagerly murderous, hovered about her, wanting to kill the man. He, half amazed yet somehow indifferent, as if too weary and bruised to care what happened, but still not wanting to be sheltered by a woman, pulled at her shoulder.

The blacks gave back before Williams' shout more readily than before Brundage's cutlass, though it had just taken the life of one of them.

"Drunk!" said Brundage, indicating the dead black. "Laid hand on her to get at him. He's that fellow Crespham."

Barai and the others jabbered gutturally, in a kind of frenzy. They wanted to kill Crespham for no more reason than that he was a stranger, and helpless. They thought he had somehow escaped them in the fight, and so now must die. The blacks had tasted blood; some of them, too, in spite of warning, had taken liquor.

Williams said something to the natives scornfully, with guttural words that seemed to explode on his lips. Their faces fell. They took on the look that whipped dogs have. They moved back uneasily, eyeing the man Brundage had killed. Coming out of their frenzy, they stupidly seemed to realize what had happened, and felt no resentment. Born into and raised among *tabus*, they understood the penalties, abided by the punishment; and, much like evil children, would have been contemptuous, perhaps soon drunken, if there had been no punishment.

"They would have killed me," said Crespham, speaking with an effort through bruised lips, "but for her!"

His clothes were torn and spotted with blood and dirt, one eye was closed, the other swollen, his cheeks were bruised and head matted with blood from the kicks of Red O'Larg's boots.

Williams, eyeing him, did not answer. Brundage did.

"I'd killed you myself but for her. Pluck, she's got . . . Well, the man who mauled you's dead. Most of the others, too. Whats' left is battened down in the cellar. You—" the cutlass point moved in a gesture from Barai to the dead black—"have 'em take this fellow off. And the next that's drunk, or acts it, will need burying too!"

Williams asked rapid questions in a tone that was aloof and cold, yet somehow as if he respected Crespham who, with a hand pointing toward the broken rail of the veranda, told what had happened.

"He did it, and knew what he was doing. No accident," said Crespham commendingly. "Whatever his crimes—and Ghorlan must have been a devil—they ought to be half forgiven."

Crespham said nothing of his own hurts. He pointed toward the doorway where Francisco had appeared.

"One man, and they were afraid of him. All of them."

Lele, he said, had escaped. He had thought Hazard was with the other men in the cellar.

"When I saw that girl Raccla, I tried to talk to them, but—well, when I came to, I didn't know what had happened."

Later he had overheard some prowling looter say that a dead woman was in the little house. He had gone there, and found his aunt's body. He sat there, brooding miserably, wondering what was to happen now, when he thought he heard fighting. He came out, expecting that the men quarreled among themselves, and so he found Louise near where she had been left when the attack was made. She had told him of Williams, and was bringing him to the house when the blacks caught sight of him, mistook him for an escaped sailor.

Brundage, putting down Ghorlan's spy-glass, said:

"There's three or four natives out there on Hazard's schooner. Drinking on the focsle."

Williams was looking down from the veranda where the railing had been

splintered away as when a great wave smashes through a bulwark. Below, the bodies were like discarded bundles, half hidden.

He turned away, told Brundage to find water for Crespham, and went back up the stairs where Raccla leaned anxiously from the balustrade.

As he came up she called to him in low eagerness.

"Francisco moved! I am sure I saw him move!" But she was not quite sure.

Williams bent again over the unconscious body, holding his hand here, there, moving Francisco and feeling as if he knew what he was about. He wiped away the blood, pressing gently, and Francisco stirred as if awakened by pain, groaned but did not open his eyes.

"Rib shattered—bad," said Williams.

He asked for cloths; told Raccla to call for Brundage to bring up water in a basin, the milk of a coconut and brandy. Raccla's hands fluttered, wanting to help. She had never thought of Williams as gentle, yet he handled Francisco tenderly.

He tore off the shirt, washing away the blood, washing the face and breast; then he moistened Francisco's lips and nostrils with brandy, and when the lips moved he took the cup of coconut milk from Raccla and poured a few drops into Francisco's mouth.

Francisco moved his lips greedily for they burned with fever. Then he opened his eyes, staring blankly, and closed them without recognition. He lay motionless.

"Is he dead now?" Raccla murmured.

Williams looked at her. The look was almost like a blow. She shrank slightly, amazed at what seemed anger.

"No—and he shall not die!"

The words, the look, were like a command from one who would be obeyed by men, or death itself; as if what he willed must be.

And when Raccla again looked down at Francisco she saw, or thought she saw, a freshening glow of life on his dark, unconscious face.



WILLIAMS went down on the hillside below the house where Ghorlan lay with a dead man on each side of him.

Williams was not enough of a Christian, or savage either, to think that burial meant anything to Ghorlan now; but he would not leave one who had befriended him lying out to the weather like a dead dog. Only with blocks and tackle could Ghorlan's body be lifted from this sharp slope. Men could not get footing to climb if they carried his weight. He must be buried as he lay.

The blacks, sweating at the use of unfamiliar tools, dug a deep trench through the tangled roots of the hillside.

Brundage watched from the veranda. Raccla stood by him, touching him, holding to him, as she bent forward. Tears dripped from her cheeks though she made no sound. Louise wiped her own eyes furtively, as if somehow ashamed and sorry.

Crespham, rather like a spectator who did not belong, stood slightly to one side with a cloth about his head, and the cloth showed red stains. Crespham felt confused, yet, for all his pain and bruises, somehow thrilled. He had come from the quiet routine of a law office in far off England into the midst of murderous drunken men, and found that other men, outlaws all of them—Ghorlan, Brundage, Francisco, Williams—were men of courage, of gallantry. Crespham, with troubled confusion, felt his sympathy going out strongly to these men, even to the dead Ghorlan who had been beyond pardon or mercy. He looked toward Louise and felt a warmth of gratitude and pity, not quite understanding who she was, or why she was here; and not caring. He stared at the grim and seemingly evil face of the tall Brundage; and Crespham unconsciously shook his head, denying the evil.

Below, the blacks heaved and grunted, digging. Williams stood there with feet apart beside Ghorlan's body and held something in his hand, something he had taken from about Ghorlan's neck.

It was a woman's picture, on ivory; the

picture of a young woman, strangely beautiful and very like Raccla. The locket was studded with jewels, and the chain, made thin by long wear, of gold. Williams stared at it, and seemed to hesitate. Once he glanced up toward Raccla, as if deciding whether or not to give it to her. But the locket and chain were laid again on Ghorlan's great shaggy breast, then his body was covered over with fine mats and laid deep in the black soil of Karnu.

The two men Ghorlan had killed were huddled in the trench at Ghorlan's feet; buried there.

Then the blacks, grunting in complaint at such labor, heaved in the dirt and tamped it down the better to hold the mound firm against the wash of heavy rains.

Before this work was done two natives came running. They gasped for breath and flung their hands in the frantic gesture of men who bring anxious news.

They were from the other side of the island, from the village near which Williams had left his schooner, and were men with whom he had made friends in sending them into the hills, with many presents, to watch for the coming of the *Astar* into the lagoon.

They now peered with alarm at Williams, both talking at once to say that the *Astar* was over there, had found Williams' ship, had taken off the sails, and put men ashore who were now coming across the island. Then the *Astar* had gone away.

Williams listened with tense watchfulness, as if at first distrustful of these messengers. He questioned them. They answered readily and with accuracy.

"We're in for it again, eh?" Brundage asked coolly.

"Chester's sending men across. From what these boys say they will be here soon. And the *Astar* has started back this way to cut us off by sea."

"We've a choice of schooners out there."

"Ghorlan's is under bare poles. Besides, her hull is grass grown driftwood."

"That means Hazard's then." Brundage spoke complacently, nodding, not displeased at the prospect.

"She sails like a turnip. And the *Astar* has steam."

"And we," said Brundage calmly, raising an empty pipe to his mouth, "luck!"

Williams looked at him sharply, with a queer twist on his lips, like a man who might smile bitterly or swear in anger; but he neither smiled nor spoke. Even Brundage, after so many years of perilous dodging, called it "luck"—this tireless, patient watchfulness, and audacious out-guessing of enemies.

Williams looked toward the sky, meditatively. By all the weather signs he knew the coming night would be cloudless, clear, without storm; which was not what he would have liked. The *Astar* undoubtedly was doubling back around the island to cut him off. A detachment of sailors, taking guides from the village, was hurrying over the trails. The *Astar*, outwitted at Waklea, had learned how to play the game better at Karnu.

As the sky was nearly cloudless, he believed that the *Astar* must arrive in time to sight him at sea, even though it would soon be dark. The tide would turn shortly before sundown, must be now already on the turn.

"Five minutes, or about that—" Williams pointed—"after the *Astar* comes through that channel, she will know we have gone. Know which way we have gone, and follow fast. With that smoke stack, she'll overhaul us before morning. About the only way we can dodge her at sea will be to sink."

Brundage took the empty pipe from his mouth, held it as if smoking, and nodded, untroubled.

"All right then, we'll sink."

"Then there's nothing else for it, Brundage. The *Astar* must come into this lagoon—and not go out."

"Do you mean that you can't get away, Captain Williams?" Raccla asked, and by look and tone, by the way her hands moved toward him and paused, showed her anxiety.

Brundage chuckled scornfully.

"He'll get away, somehow."

Crespham, standing near but still feel-

ing a little like an intrusive spectator, found himself growing uneasily anxious on Williams' behalf. He, a loyal, honest unromantic Englishman, wanted the outlaw to come off safely.

"I say—" Crespham spoke hesitantly, feeling a little uncomfortable at the way every one instantly turned toward him—"I say, Captain Williams, er, you know, if they *do* come, why we can jolly well tell this naval vessel what you have done! That ought to make a difference, oughtn't it?"

"Crespham, the only difference it would make is to get yourself disliked by Captain Chester and his officers."

"I'll damn well tell 'em what I think anyhow!" said Crespham, with feeling. Louise looked at him strangely, and Crespham felt more embarrassed.

"You talk like that and you'll wear irons the rest of your life," said Brundage, with only a slight twitch of his lips to show that he joked.

"Brundage?"

"Aye?"

"I'll take some boys and lay aboard that schooner. As soon as you see me well on board, begin to see to it that every canoe on the beach has a hole in it. If there's anything left in which they can go outside the reefs and meet the *Astar*, we'll not get off. If they can't get word to her, she will steam in here, against the tide. And once inside, I don't care what she learns! We'll be gone."

"And when you go, Captain Williams, you will take me with you?" Raccla begged. "I can not stay, now. Father—gone—and where, unless you take me, Captain Williams, can I go?"

She touched him, pleading silently.

Williams shook his head, giving no other reply. He could not say, for words of explanation did not come easily to him who hid his thoughts and feelings and seldom spoke except to give orders, that he would do whatever under heaven seemed best for her. He lived in the midst of shipwrecks and fights, much of the time among savages. The *Astar* was coming; the officers of the *Astar* were gentlemen,

were her friends, had been her father's friends, and would see that she was placed with kindly people who would care for her, love her. But he could not speak of all that, and so shook his head and turned away bruskiy.



HAZARD'S schooner was not much of a craft to be sure, slow and certainly dirty, but with solid bows like a strong man's shoulders, and good for rough weather, but sluggish in even a gale. The *Astar* would overhaul her hand over hand.

Williams took two blacks with him, leaving the others with Brundage who was to see that all canoes along the beach were broken up and that Francisco was brought down on a mattress for a stretcher.

He took a canoe to go out to Hazard's *Langley*, paddles being more noiseless than oars, a canoe swifter than a boat; and though he had nothing to fear from the three or four native sailors drinking on the forecastle, still it was always best to do things by surprise. So the canoe was brought up against the larboard bend, right up against the side of the schooner, and with the noiseless stroke of a paddle on one side and fending of hands on the other, crept well amidships.

Williams kicked off his shoes, reached up, caught the top of the bulwarks and raised himself chin high and looked over the deck. No one was in sight. Drunken voices could be heard near the galley. The voices were high pitched but not quarreling. He raised himself and swung over noiselessly, and at once ran forward, around the galley, and came upon the unsuspecting men who lolled there, cups in hand and bottles nearby.

They looked up, startled, then with a frightened, backward scramble they drunkenly arose. They staggered together, terrified, and gaped, expecting death as the two blacks appeared at Williams' back.

"Who's on board?" Williams snapped.

They stared stupidly, not answering, but peered at the menacing blacks until Williams caught one by the wrist and

jerked him forward.

"Anybody besides you three?"

"Cap'n Hazard him here on shippee."

"Where?"

"Him b'low along that woman."

"What woman?"

"Chinke girl."

"But she got away!"

"But we fin' 'er an'— Ow!"

Williams' fist came back and up, then stopped. He did not strike. The native was helplessly drunk. He flung the arm free, told his blacks to pitch these men down into the forecastle; then without a pause or backward glance, Williams, on bare tiptoes, went aft.

This side of the companion, hearing a stream of oaths from below, he stopped short at the open skylight. The cover was off. He leaned over, peering down, and saw a bulky man stooping above a huddle of bright silk, bare arms and feet, and dark hair that lay as if spilled on the deck.

Hazard's hoarse voice rolled up in proud, satisfied brutality as he shook a hairy thick fist toward the deck.

"I warned you, I did! Said I'd break ever' bone in your blarsted body if you—try to knife me, will you!"

Williams caught the edge of the skylight, lithely swung his body over and dropped. His bare feet struck with a muffled thud. Hazard spun about as if he felt the devil's hot breath on his neck. His bearded mouth opened—and hung open as if the jaw were broken. Fright blazed in his eyes as if indeed the devil himself had appeared. He shuffled back with a gasp of breath and choked in trying to swallow.

Williams said nothing, did nothing until in silence he plucked from Hazard's loose fingers the dull case knife which in Lele's frail hand had torn the skin, scarcely more, of Hazard's breast.

"Tried to knife me, she did," Hazard blurted, licking at his dry lips as he drew farther back.

"An'—an' I give 'er a cuff. She ain't hurt. Tried to knife me an'—"

Williams did not speak, and made no move except to draw the dull knife across

his fingers, then toss it aside. But his eyes did not once for even an instant leave Hazard's face. The knife struck the deck with a sharp clatter and, like a small broken bell jingled vibrantly, sounding loud in the strained stillness of the cabin.

"Now listen, Cap'n Williams. That Ghorlan, he—"

Hazard's tone begged, but the words became a broken, dry mouthed mumbling before the unwavering gleam in eyes bright as carbuncles and as hard.

Staring fixedly at Hazard all the while, Williams took one step forward and sank to a knee. He gropingly reached out, touched Lele, ran his hand over her distorted, broken body. With eyes straight on Hazard he spoke softly:

"Lele? Lele!"

He had come too late. There was no stir of life.

Then suddenly, without warning sign or word, all the restrained strength of Hurricane Williams released itself as he rose in a headlong jump straight at Hazard. Knife and revolver were at Williams' side, but he sprang with empty hands, with arms out. Hazard's bellowing shout was hushed in his throat by fingers that gripped like the clamp of iron.

Hazard had a brute's body and strength. Whipped to it by terror, he fought like a brute. Yet he was helpless. He was slammed up against the bulkhead, and the hand on his throat stayed there until with sudden jerk Hazard felt his wrist caught and the hand at his throat joined that on his wrist. And Hazard knew what was coming, knew by the feel, by the pain, by the merciless justice of it, by the look in Williams' eyes that spoke like words. In terrified struggling, Hazard struck and lunged to free himself. But he was caught and held—hurt in a merciless grip, even as he had caught and held and hurt the fragile body of the tortured dead girl that lay on the deck near his feet. He begged, he made sounds like prayer; but he found no mercy now. His arm was turned in a writhing twist until the bones cracked with the snapping sound of a green stick when it breaks.

Williams flung the broken arm free, and it dangled as loosely as the sleeve of a torn shirt. He sprang at him again and fastened both hands on Hazard's neck.

CHAPTER XIV

A NEW COURSE

THE SAILORS that came over the hills with Lieutenant Osborn at their head, and the pudgy, bald Dr. Butler puffing away near the rear, had seen Hazard's schooner from afar; and though they were unaware that Williams had been warned of their coming, they knew that he, as soon as he saw himself being cornered, would make for it. So they ran as hard as they could, hoping to get up nearer along the beach and cut him off. Their excitement increased as they looked toward the schooner and saw two wild, shaggy headed blacks gesturing and shouting toward the shore as if giving warning.

Suddenly, on ahead of them, from around where the beach curved, a boat filled with men and moving swiftly appeared. Blacks were at the oars, but not rowing. They paddled, stroking swiftly; and a tall man, Brundage by the look of him, stood at the steering oar, and a girl was by him.

"Raccla! They're stealing Raccla—the devils!" Osborn swore.

Seizing a musket from the man nearest, he ordered his men to fire. The sailors fired raggedly. Bullets splattered near and far, all wide of the boat.

Osborn cursed, but the doctor, gasping for breath, said:

"But you saw—Brundage put her behind him. That was decent. She might have been hit."

"When they're carrying her off? We've got to stop them!"

"That must be Williams himself on the schooner—standing there."

"We'll take canoes and attack. It'll soon be dark."

The shadows of sunset were deepening into the blue-purple haze that would soon be darkness.

The boat they had fired on was disappearing around the bows of the schooner, and a moment later men were all over the deck, working hastily at the sails.

The sailors saw two figures on the beach and ran at them. Crespham looked like a man who had been beaten nearly to death, and Louise, too, looked as if she had been wretchedly mistreated.

"Those devils, they must have nearly killed you!" Osborn cried.

"Devils, nothing, sir," said Crespham. "Splendid fellows, I call them!"

"What's that?" Osborn shouted angrily.

"Eh?" said the little doctor, with a hand up to his ear as if to make sure it was there and hearing aright.

"And who are you? And who warned Williams? And why have they stolen Raccla?" Osborn asked all in one long breath.

He glowered angrily at Crespham, who told what he could, and Louise, with her hand on Crespham's arm, nodded affirmingly, adding a quick word now and then with emphasis.

There was much to tell, and so much of it was amazing that it sounded to Osborn like a jumble of falsehoods, this story of who Ghorlan was, what he had done, of his struggle on the veranda, his death and burial on the hillside.

Not at all deterred by Osborn's cloudy frown, Crespham spoke with admiration of the attack on Hazard's men.

"And a jolly good job he made of it, too. Alone, he went down there in the midst of 'em—and Miss Ghorlan's word for it—he made that red bounder who was their leader poke his own knife in his own ribs. Splendid, I call it!"

The little doctor now rubbed at first one ear and then the other, and shook his head, bewildered.

"The *Anne of Southern*," he said, hastily wiping at his bald head. "I remember her loss—was on an Indian station when she disappeared. Never a word of her till now. And Ghorlan seemed a fine fellow."

"He has been the friend of Williams all this time. Count on it," said Osborn.

"They've shared that treasure together. No doubt of it!"

"And you say," asked the doctor, "that Raccla went willingly?"

"Why, of course," said Louise with spirit, approvingly.

"He did not want to take her," Crespham explained. "But he was out there, and she ran to the boat. Brundage let her get in."

"Sir," said the boatswain's mate, making his salute a part of the gesture that swept the beach, "the beggars have put holes in every canoe!"

Osborn turned in exasperation.

"Damn them, but they have luck! Yet the *Astar* must be here in another two or three hours. They can't get away. And keep the men firing."



IT WAS ALMOST quite dark when, in the midst of the crackling gunfire, half aimless in the dusk and at that distance, shouts as if some one was hailing the shore came from the schooner. They listened, half expecting taunts, but heard—

"Truce—receive me under flag of truce!"

"What the devil?" said the doctor.

"Never!" Osborn exclaimed, not answering Williams' shout but expressing what he felt.

"Be a good way to catch 'im!" said a sailor thoughtlessly.

"Not for Englishmen!" Osborn snapped.

"Well spoken," said the doctor, glaring at the sailor who backed off, shamefaced.

"Answer no!" Osborn told the boatswain's mate.

"Ah, but just a moment," said the doctor. "Why not, Osborn? Let him come ashore under a white flag."

"Why he's a pirate. This isn't war. He has none of the rights of war."

"But no harm's to come, Osborn. Can't possibly. We hear what he has to say. And," the doctor added in a low voice, "it may be about Raccla."

"Well, and what of her? She went willingly. And now we know that she's the daughter of a pirate, worse than Williams!

She, as much as Ghorlan, has protected him. Why," said Osborn, making angered conjectures, "they were all in that scheme to get Francisco loose! Williams and the lot of them were hiding in the house. Ghorlan knew it, and she too. We've been shamelessly tricked, Butler. Shamelessly!"

"You mean—"

"I mean just that, sir!"

"Oh, but Osborn, my dear boy," said the doctor, perplexed and troubled, "Raccla's but a child, and to look at her you know, anybody would know—lovely—innocent—"

"She's the daughter of a traitor, sir!"

"No more so now," snapped the doctor, "than when you—you—you told me yourself that you loved her."

"I was mistaken."

"Still," said the doctor insistently, "look at it another way. Duty, in a way. Don't you see? He's ready to sail off. Escape. We can't stop him. They mind that long range firing out there no more than the hum of flies. But it will take time—delay him—if he comes ashore. And don't you see, Osborn, the longer you hold him, the nearer the *Astar* will be when he goes out? There's nothing to lose. Not a thing. You can refuse whatever he asks. But it may mean—this half hour's delay may mean catching him."

"Umm," said Osborn, reflectively. "That is true. Very well, then. But I'll have no dealings with him. None of any kind. I hold you to witness if ever there's an inquiry. We are receiving him under a flag of truce not to parley but to delay his escape."

The boatswain's mate passed the order to stop firing, put by his musket, and walked down to the water's edge. He fingered the silver pipe at the lanyard about his neck, then cupped his hands and shouted.

A few minutes later, dimly seen in the gathering dusk, a boat came into view around the schooner's stern. When it drew nearer, blacks could be seen at the oars. Williams and Raccla were together

in the stern sheets, and from the blade of an upright oar in the bow floated a rag of canvas, the flag of truce.

"You know," said the doctor nervously, "I take it as the devil of a fine compliment to ourselves, to the British navy, that after all he's done, he will trust himself like this—on our word. Few rascals would."

The blacks, nearing the beach, turned the boat and came up, stern first. They drew in the oars, jumped into the waist deep water, and ran the stern up on the sand.

Williams stood up, waiting until the boat was high on the sand. He seemed unaware of the peering faces of the sailors that pressed close, eager to have a good look at him.

He turned to Raccla, lifting her to the sand. She was weary and worn, very tired, with shadows of fatigue on her face and sadness in her eyes, which were red with weeping. She glanced with something like hope toward Lieutenant Osborn who very carefully did not meet her eyes, but frowned with stern inquiry at Williams.

The little doctor, with bald head glistening and sweat running over his face, pushed up close to Raccla, took her hand and said vaguely, "Ah, child!" His throat seemed choked.

The blacks continued to stand in the water, uneasily ready to be off at the slightest alarm. They rolled their eyes doubtfully at the white flag floating gently from the oar's blade, and were not at all sure that its magic would keep them from harm.

"Lieutenant Osborn," said Williams, with a slight gesture but no glance toward Crespham and Louise, "no doubt you've been told what happened. I doubt if you or other men will believe the truth of it. If I had been ashore I would not have taken Raccla out there. Especially not after I knew what she would find. Lele, beaten to death by Hazard! I would have left Raccla here—meant to leave her—with Crespham and Louise for your ship to take away. But Brundage brought her.

So now, but only because she is willing to trust herself to your care, I have brought her ashore. Will you see that she is looked after? In the future? Make some arrangement suitable for a girl of her misfortune, and loveliness?"

Osborn fidgeted with the handle of his sword. He moved his feet in the sand, straightened his straight shoulders, with rather an effort kept his eyes from wavering toward Raccla, but met Williams' stare and said firmly—

"I can make no promises of any kind to you!"

"What!" Williams answered on the instant with words that seemed storm blown. "An English officer refuse help to a woman in distress! To the daughter of one who was your friend!"

Osborn burned with indignation. He hadn't meant that at all. He felt more or less stupidly trapped. The words hurt, the tone, the quick flare of reproach that had twisted his refusal to make promises into so discreditable an interpretation. Osborn answered angrily—

"You no doubt knew that Ghorlan was a traitor to his country and a pirate, but I—I did not!"

Williams turned at once with his arms about her and said quietly—

"Come, Raccla."

Her head had fallen as when a flower wilts. She did not cry, but turned blindly, submissive.

"Oh, I say," Crespham began, impulsively but half hesitant as if he did not know just how to shape his words. "I'll be glad—"

But the little doctor spoke more quickly and loudly. He pushed at Williams, and for some reason or other seemed trembling with anger.

"See here! I've only a surgeon's pay, but I've got a sister in England. I'll be glad—like a daughter—be glad to do it! You, child, you'll let me, won't you? And you, Williams? Me, you'll trust me to—I'll do anything for her."

"I'm sure of it," said Williams. "And what is more, she isn't to go penniless!"

With a quickness that startled those

nearby so that they drew back and some made slight gestures of defense, he drew his sheath knife. Then loosening his belt, he ripped at the inside of the waistband and drew out a small, slender package, no thicker than the finger of a glove, but slightly longer, and thrust it into the doctor's hand.

"They were honestly come by. Pearls. Fished by natives. Enough for you, both of you. And for reasons of my own, they belong to her."

"Ow," gasped a sailor's husky voice, "part o' the treasure!"

Williams' head came up with a jerk. Many men were close about but he looked straight at the one who had spoken, and said:

"You lie. And let any man touch, claim, or try to defraud her of what I have given, and I will find him, wherever he is. These are mine. Worked for, paid for. No drop of blood on them. That treasure of Ghorlan's has cursed every man that reached for it."

Williams paused, his glance sweeping from face to face. His words had the sound of prophecy. Men even felt strangely convinced.

Then abruptly, Williams turned. Before the doctor or Raccla realized that he would not pause for a last word with them, he had stepped by them, into the boat.

"*Fakarel!*"

The eager blacks gave a shove that ran the boat far off the beach, then scrambling in over the gunwales caught up the oars.

Twilight had passed. Darkness, not yet starlit, lay over the lagoon. The schooner was a blob of black shadows, whitened with sail, far out on the water and already under way.

Raccla, voiceless with sorrow, stood on the beach, peering, with arms half out, as if calling silently.



TWO HOURS later Lieutenant Osborn sat sullenly and alone on the veranda, waiting for the *Astar* to come. He was angered and depressed. Some of the sailors, even after being sternly warned, had got

out of hand, stolen bottles of liquor, made off into the shadows of the bush and were carousing.

The boatswain's mate, who was keeping a lookout for the *Astar*, came near Osborn and said—

"Sir, would *you* just have a look at what I myself think I see, sir?"

"Now what, Wilson?"

"After what I thought I saw earlier this evening—" the boatswain's mate broke off.

He, peering through the dusk as the *Langley* was nosing out to sea, had said he saw a boat leave her and make toward the old schooner of Ghorlan's that was moored near the channel.

No one else had been able to make it out; and Osborn had been sarcastic, inviting the boatswain's mate to use his judgment, and not imagine things.

"Well, what do you think you see now?" Osborn asked.

"Would you believe your eyes, sir, if you thought you saw him coming back?"

"The devil, no!"

"Will you just have a look, sir?"

The boatswain's mate led the way to the seaward corner of the veranda.

Osborn peered, stared, and swore in astonishment—

"But it can't be!"

"So I thought, sir."

There in the bright starlight, not far offshore and standing in, was the clear, even if ghostly outline, of a foretopsail schooner. It came from the north, from the same direction in which, scarcely two hours before, it had disappeared. The starlight was hazy and indistinct, but theirs were sailor eyes. It was almost impossible that there could be another such schooner at this time off the island.

"What can it mean, sir?"

"I can't imagine. That is, if it is the same schooner."

"I'm sure of it, sir."

"But it can't be, Watson. He knows the *Astar* is coming—and returns to meet her? Common sense, just plain common sense, makes it impossible."

"And there—I make out the *Astar* now, sir!"

And so it was. The *Astar*, with sails furled and smoke pouring from her funnel, came into view from the south; which meant, of course, that those who were on the schooner had sighted the *Astar* long before she could be seen from the veranda.

"That can't be Hazard's schooner," said Osborn. "It's just another that looks like her. She's standing off with wind and tide against her. Can't come into the lagoon. Not till slack water, then tow."

"I don't feel easy in my mind, sir," said the boatswain's mate in a hushed voice.

"What do you mean?"

"I ain't sure that what we think we see, you and me, is there at all, sir."

"Oh, rot," said Osborn.

But the boatswain's mate persisted stubbornly.

"You can see, sir, the *Astar* is changing her course without paying any heed to that fellow. It's just as if they didn't see the schooner that we are looking at. And they are passing close enough to hail her."

"Don't be a fool, Wilson. Captain Chester isn't interested in a schooner that's heading this way. Now if she were standing out—well, be sure he'd overhaul her quick enough."

"Maybe that's why they've come back, sir. To make it appear they aren't running away."

Osborn groaned in angry exasperation.

"Williams went out a good two hours ago. By now he must be seven or eight miles offshore, though that *Langley's* a poor sailor. And he wouldn't come back right into the *Astar's* guns."

The boatswain's mate shook his head, muttering vaguely, unconvinced.

The *Astar* came through the channel, passed the *Raccla* and, steaming slowly, went to her usual anchorage, well out in the lagoon. Before the anchor was down a boat was sent away, bringing Captain Chester ashore.

As the boat neared the beach he called out confidently—

"Well, Osborn, have we got him?"

"No, sir."

"What's that? What's that, Osborn?"

"There's been the devil to pay, sir. Ghorlan—not Ghorlan at all! A pirate worse than Williams ever was! *Anne of Southern . . .*"

Captain Chester came on to the beach and, while the sailors who had brought him ashore clustered about, listened amazed and shocked to Osborn's recital.

"But Williams? What of him?"

"Gone, sir."

"Gone? Gone where?"

"Seized Hazard's schooner and—"

"But that can't be. She's just outside. She hailed us as we came up and—" He pointed as he spoke and, in pointing, turned.

The *Langley* lay outside the reefs, well out. But it was not toward her that Captain Chester stared, puzzled; and his puzzlement grew and became amazement.

"Why the *Raccla's* adrift! Or is that—don't you see? It is—why, it *is* a boat on ahead, and they're towing with the tide. Towing that old schooner into the channel! Osborn!" Captain Chester's tone was severe. "Under your very eyes, Williams sent off a boat to the *Raccla* to wait until we steamed in, then cast off the moorings, and now if he scuttles her, sinks her in the channel, we'll be caught hard

and fast! Quick, back to the ship!"

But before the boat reached the ship there was a muffled explosion and the old *Raccla*, with a hole blown in her bows, settled by the head as if diving.

It was plain enough now what happened, and the boatswain's mate had been right. In the darkness men had rowed to the *Raccla*, taking with them some of Hazard's dynamite, used for fishing. A scuttled ship might drift and not settle properly to block the channel, but one with the stem blown out of her would fill and go down at once.

The *Astar*, with steam still up, jerked up her anchor, turned about and made for the channel's blocked mouth; and there with futile flash and roar of guns blazed away at the bobbing ghost of a schooner that lay aback to pick up the boat, coming toward her under a slow tug of oars.

High upon the hillside, *Raccla*, with fingers to her ears, watched and trembled. And the little doctor, most disloyally, half prayed that the gunners' aim would be poor. In the starlight the shells went wide; and after picking up her boat, the schooner, showing no haste at all, presently got before the wind and, with all sail set, glided off; and soon, like a ghost of the sea, vanished.



THE END



The CAMP-FIRE

*A free-to-all meeting place for
readers, writers and adventurers*

HUGH PENDEXTER gives us a bit of the background on which he built "Devil's Brew," his two-part novel of the Floridas, beginning in this issue:

Norway, Maine

Florida was the theater of about every species of lawless adventure. The Spanish population was small, and Spain's authority was almost nil. It naturally became the playground for a great variety of bad boys. Buccaneering seemed to be indigenous and became a threat to all lawful commerce. Spain was unable to control the Floridas, and foreign scamps and refugee Indians initiated a state of lawlessness which was inimical to the interests of the United States.

Under orders from President Monroe, Captain Henly, U. S. Navy, took possession of Amelia

Island, December 22, 1817. A hundred and fifty outcasts had taken over the island, the small Spanish garrison being unable to resist them. These pirates and smugglers made it a port of entry, through which goods were smuggled into the United States. Spain was unable to clean house. Out of the criminal audacity of these adventurers came the Seminole War. The United States merely indulged in the first of all laws, that of self-defense, when policing a land where no other authority could be exerted.

AS EARLY as the fall of 1812, the Seminoles and runaway Negroes, alleged to have been set on by the Governor of St. Augustine, massacred helpless settlers on the St. John's and St. Mary's Rivers. Other depredations rapidly followed. From what had become a pest-hole of anarchy, death was spewed along the frontiers of Alabama and Georgia.

When General Jackson received his orders on Jan. 12, 1818, the unfortunate system of drafting militia for short terms threatened to leave the commander without an army. The system of provisioning the troops by contract was most miserable, and resulted in Jackson's ordering his men to "subsist on the enemy." That he might not be left without an army, he called on Tennessee men who were with him at New Orleans. The hanging of Alexander Arbuthnot, a Scotchman, and the shooting of Robert C. Ambrister, for inciting the Indians to war, caused repercussions for thirty years in Congress. Jackson's enemies made much of the double execution and cited the fact that the court of inquiry reconsidered its vote on Ambrister and voted him fifty stripes on the bare back and twelve months' confinement in the ball-and-chain gang. The first vote was for death by shooting. Jackson approved of the first sentence, and both men were executed. Jackson's enemies ignored the fact that there is a vast difference between a court of inquiry and a court-martial, one recommending, the other deciding.

HILLIS HADJO was hanged, as were several other red leaders, not for inciting war, but for murder. In various old accounts of Florida I find mention and descriptions of what once were causeways, forts, etc., and this was my cue for fictionizing them. The early writers insist such remains of ancient road building, and so forth, were not the result of any red culture, but of an earlier people, about whom as little is known as is known concerning the Mound Builders.

"A war with the Indians in Florida was always literally and emphatically a slave-hunt," according to the 'Popular History of the U. S.' by Bryant and Gay. Much was made in Congress of Jackson's letter to President Monroe, in which he said among other things, "Let it be signified to me through any channel that the possession of the Floridas would be desirable to the United States, and in sixty days it will be accomplished."

This is the letter Monroe did not see, because of sickness, until a year later. Jackson naturally believed he was backed by the administration in all he did.

Roosevelt, in his "Life of Benton," says in part, "The conflict with the Seminoles was one of the legacies left by Jackson to Van Buren. It lasted as long as the Revolutionary War, cost thirty millions of dollars, and baffled the hopes of several generals and numerous troops, who had previously shown themselves equal to any in the world." He further states, in regard to the second war, 1835-42, that "the Indians were worn out, rather than conquered."

—HUGH PENDEXTER

A NOTE from Georges Surdez in connection with "Desert Ambush," his true story of the Foreign Legion, in this issue:

I have met most of the survivors of the ambush at the Jebel Arlal. Sergeant Schweicher, Mechanic Campillo and others are known to be my personal friends. So I wish to state clearly that it was not from them that I heard that carelessness of superior officers caused the tragedy. My information on that subject was gathered in the Western Sahara itself, where it was freely discussed.

Carelessness, overconfidence? The lesson was already forgotten, for I saw trucks roll out ahead or behind schedule, with the only weapon aboard an automatic pistol owned by the chauffeur. Those who preach caution seem a nuisance when on the spot. For example, I deemed a certain kindly Native Intelligence officer my worst enemy because he cut short some of my more ambitious rambling. There was one time when I wished to cross the Algero-Moroccan border to reach the outpost of Atchana, hoping to worm my way into a detachment going on patrol. This was ruthlessly squashed, and the poor chap had a bitter enemy for a time. Until I learned that the Atchana *goum* had been wiped out to the last man, 43 killed, on that "absolutely safe scouting trip." My informer and friend, who commanded, was slain also.

Some claim that El Haj Belkassim, famous raiding chieftain, organized and carried out the ambush. I don't believe it. El Haj Belkassim is blamed, or credited, with too many such things; my hunch is that his name is merely the Arabic equivalent for John Doe.

—GEORGES SURDEZ

HENRY G. LAMOND, who wrote "A Porcine Medley," in this issue, rises to make his bow to the members of Camp-fire.

Molle Islands, Proserpine,
Queensland, Australia

In collaboration with my parents I arranged to be born at Carl Creek, on the Gregory River, N. Q., being the first white baby ever born in that district. That happened 30/6/85. On my mother's side I am the fifth generation born in Australia. One of her early ancestors, it is said, came over in charge of one of the first batches of convicts with which the country was settled. He may have been in charge of 'em, or he may have been one of them. Honestly, I don't know, and I care less. Perhaps in these democratic days it would be to my advantage to say he was one of 'em.

After being born nothing much ever happened to me. I went to various schools, regularly disappointing my parents with the results of my training, and then, when the time was ripe, I went bush. In other words, I went to work on stations in the back country. I did my share of handling stock of all sorts. In fact, with all due modesty, I sometimes think I did more than my share, going well out and opening up several thousand square miles of new country. After about twenty years of cattle,

sheep, horses and other creatures I reckoned it a fair thing to have a change.

I bought a banana plantation on the Tweed River, N. S. W. It took Providence the best part of eighteen months to convince me I was never made to be a banana grower. I went back to the best thing I knew—station managing. I went into the banana business full of faith and finance. I went back to the cattle with both sadly depleted.

THAT was about the time, about ten years back, I gathered the idea there was money in a type-writer. I had a wide field to work, the material was inexhaustible and, but for the niggling which others had given the outside edge, the thing was all mine to exploit. In the language of the classics, I decided to give it a go. But that was only a sideline. The management of a station was my first consideration. But there was no harm in watching the actions of animals, both domesticated and wild, and storing that in my mind to serve as a basis for stories later. I went on doing it.

Then about the end of '26 I felt a loathing of the back country, a hatred of its heat and glare, its flies, its winds, its scorching heat and its biting cold. I reckoned it was up to me to go into partial retirement from active work, keeping the old type with me to hold the wolf at bay. I did it once more. I bought some islands off the Queensland coast. I'm here now. Nominally, I'm raising sheep. Really, I'm making a pretense of work, living a life of moderate ease, catching fish which are fools enough to commit suicide, eating fruit as it ripens, taking advantage to the full of a glorious climate, owning my own little group of islands handy to the mainland and in the track of all shipping. That's the life! That's what I'm doing. In between times I draw on the fund of first-hand material which is mine, and when the Editor approves, then another story of mine appears in *Adventure*.

—HENRY G. LAMOND.

THE writer of the appended letter is a Government hunter. Whether or not his exceptions taken to "The Wolves of Howling Butte" apply as well to general as to personal wildcraft experience, is a matter of opinion. However, we may be sure that Mr. Young knows whereof he speaks, and we should be glad to have him hold forth here on some of the questions propounded by Raymond S. Spears in his answer.

Denio, Oregon

I have sat back in the rear rank and enjoyed *Adventure* for many years, but now I have got a hunch to remonstrate. Mr. Raymond S. Spears writes some good stories, but he is "off the trail" in several places in "The Wolves of Howling Butte."

On page 5 he infers that Government trappers are hired or selected because they have passed a Civil Service examination. Not so, Mr. Spears. Here is how you get on the U. S. B. S. payroll: Fill out application blank, stating *experience in trapping*. Give names of several stock men who can and will vouch for your ability (and reliability). Send blank in to District Inspector or "Leader of Predatory Animal Control." (Men who have had years of *experience* as professional trappers of wolves and coyotes, always are preferred.) Then, when there is a vacancy, you get tried out, and if you make good, you get a raise in salary. Every year, in the slack season many of the least efficient ones are culled out and discharged.

Another point on Page 11: "He was surprised to find this was Thursday. He had thought it was Monday." Well, that is a mistake no U. S. trapper would make, because he *always* keeps a field diary and jots down the work done *every day*, and copies this into his report (made weekly if convenient) to the Predatory Animal Inspector. Report made in duplicate; one stays in files of District office and the other, after being approved by the Inspector, is forwarded to Washington office.

On page 32: "Thoroughly healthy wolves would scorn sheep, cattle and horse meat." My experience has been that *nearly* all crippled wolves and coyotes are stock killers, and about one in ten that are *not* crippled also get the habit.

On page 34: "There all five traps were, with the yellow chamois caught in the jaws." Real trappers *do not* use chamois skin to cover traps. They use a piece of light canvas (boiled along with sage leaves, and dried). This is placed over the pan and *under* the jaws of the trap, so if the trap is sprung, the patch will not retard the action of the jaws.

And now a last word of advice: Next time you go out to shoot wolves, take a *real* rifle. (I prefer a 30-06 Springfield with a 3X telescope sight.) Also use S. P. bullets (not *silver*) and don't look for wolves in a blizzard, because no wolf or coyote will travel in a blizzard and no man could see one or hit one if he was there. All predatory animals den up in holes, caves or thick brush and timber at the first breath of a blizzard.

I reckon you want to ask how in heck I know so much, so here goes: I caught my first coyote in 1880 and since then I have caught *thousands* of predatory animals.

—R. W. YOUNG, U. S. B. S. Hunter.

Mr. Spears's reply:

Inglewood, California

Yours regarding my story, "The Wolves of Howling Butte," contains a lot of useful information, which I am glad to have, not so much for fiction but in studying the varied methods of trappers, details of Government killer practises and regional characteristics.

You overlook, regarding Civil Service, that the

trapper in the story was in fact a specialist, a biologist obtaining practical field experience.

As to keeping a daily record—the trapper I describe was a novice in details. I've made these daily statements myself as a Government employee. And don't tell me a Government worker long in the field can be absolutely sure of his dates.

I'm mighty grateful for your statement: "... nearly' all crippled wolves and coyotes are stock killers, and about one in ten that are not crippled also get the habit."

Your experience is interesting, but in one district I know of there was just one sheep killer—and killing more than ninety coyotes did not reach that killer. I'm afraid your experience, though locally thorough, is still limited. This is shown when you say *real* trappers do not use chamois skin. Real trappers don't all use canvas, nor chamois, nor soft paper, and I question whether canvas is as good as lighter cloth, or waterproofed drilling, or even paper—in some circumstances.

Your idea of a real rifle is a matter of choice. One friend of mine preferred a .22 Special rim fire for deer—in some circumstances.

And as for wolves in a blizzard—you overlook the characteristics of a pack of wolves who have lost their tails and who, being crippled, could not be figured out any more than you could tell what a wounded deer is going to do. You never saw two crippled coyotes, wolves or other cunning animals—bear or fox—whose minds worked alike. And as it happens, wolves have traveled in blizzards, whether you have seen them or not. When you say a wolf or coyote never travels in a blizzard, and that no man could see one or hit one if he was there—you have a lot of unjustified confidence in your breadth of knowledge. You can't limit wild life in that way—even under Biological Survey approval of your abilities and science.

Perhaps the most comprehensive and best account of wolves ever written is "The Last Stand of the Pack", by Arthur H. Carhart, formerly of the Forest Service. On page 205 of this authoritative book (J. H. Sears & Co., N. Y. City), begins the story of Gray Terror. Here is one paragraph:

"Gray Terror was an old wolf. He had seen many such winters. He had always gloried in them. Even when it meant hunger for several days while the other life of the range dug out, the old wolf would range through the rack of the storm, becoming a part of the vicious revelry."

At the same time, you understand any statement you made about what you know a wolf or coyote actually does would not be denied by any one in his senses. Some years ago one of the boys told me about how you—or was it Stanley P. Young?—cleaned up a she-wolf and her grown young pack over in the Strawberry Canyon country. Got all four one morning. And then there was a bad one came down to the Snake River out of Idaho—seems to me a Young got it.

I wonder how many bad wolves, outlaws, take poison baits? Take a hundred sheep-killing co-

yotes, how many would touch poison, dead baits, do you think?

Been wondering, some, about the comparative merits of steel, poison and bullets when it comes to bringing in a killer, like Three Toes, the Custer Wolf—those individuals and packs that follow a sheep band.

I'd sure like to know what you think of the comparative intelligence of coyotes, wolves and, say, a half wild killer-dog. There have been some bad wild dogs over in West Oregon—ever get up against them? How do they measure up with gray wolf and old coyote?

Understand, I'm glad you jumped me on those points. A man lives and learns—there are about 200 wild life regions in the U. S., and in every one a newcomer would be fooled by some of the local conditions. And I know you well enough to know that when you go after wolves and after certain coyotes you get right down to individual peculiarities and have to do it, knowing as you do no two are ever exactly alike.

—RAYMOND S. SPEARS



BOOKS on the Knights Templar. Professor Thompson's suspicion is well founded: Harold Lamb consulted for his *Crusades* series only original sources.

In the June 1st issue of *Adventure* there is an enquiry from a correspondent in regard to books on the Knights Templar and a reply by Mr. Harold Lamb, who makes the amazing answer that he "does not know of any book now in print that gives a good account of the Templars." Permit me to cite the following:

- A. S. Turberville, *The Templar Order in Europe* (London 1930)
- H. C. Lea, *History of the Inquisition*, III, chapter 5
- H. C. Lea, "The absolution formula of the Knights Templar," *Papers American Society of Church History*, V (1893), pp 37-53
- Ferris, "Financial relations of the Knights Templar," *American Historical Review* VIII, p 1
- Perkins, "Trial of the Knights Templar in England," *English Historical Review*, XXIV, p 432
- Charles Browne, "The Knights Templar," *St. Paul's Ecclesiastical Society* II, pp 130-49
- Denison, G. T. A. *History of cavalry*—chapter on "feudalism, chivalry and the crusades."
- Archer and Kingsford, *The Crusades*, pp 169-87
- Literature in French and German is reviewed in *English Historical Review*, volumes III, 149; XI, 146; XIII, 436; XV, 567; XIX, 569; XX, 619; XXVI, 568.

Mr. Lamb must have been reading very old and antiquated books.—JAMES WESTFALL THOMPSON, Professor of Medieval History, the University of Chicago.

SOMETHING about alligators and vampire bats by General de Nogales, who ran across many of both in his adventures in the wilds of Central America:

Explorers Club, New York City

It is a well known fact that the alligators forage along the river banks or along the shores of the marshy lagoons during the night, while during the day (preferably during the noon hours) they sleep on those shores. Most of the alligator hunting is performed on the *cayos* and along the swampy lowlands of the coast of Quintana Roo, not by the Maya Indians but by "outsiders": mostly Mexican sailors, smugglers or sundry other riff-raff from the Antilles and the east coast of Central America, who visit the coasts of Quintana Roo as a rule, secretly, to do unlawful trading.

Since the alligator skins have risen in value for various reasons, alligator hunting has become quite a profitable business around the Caribbean Sea in the

past thirty years. In order not to destroy the market value of the skins (through bullet or harpoon holes) the alligator hunters usually bag their game by approaching it on hands and knees, so as not to be seen, and jamming between the alligator's open jaws a stick pointed at both ends, to which a rope or lariat is attached. The rest is easy.

Now about vampire bats: What we call in Spanish *vampiro*, or vampire bat, is not the large sized bat but precisely the small one that bites at night and preferably in the moonshine. I know that by experience, because I was bitten by *vampiros* once in my ear (in the moonlight) and twice at my fingertips while camping in the jungles and savannas at the foot of the Cordillera de los Andes, in Venezuela and Colombia. The *vampiro* holds itself motionless, by means of the rapid flapping of its wings, over the exposed limb, and sucks through a tiny incision a considerable amount of blood, sometimes in only a few moments, without its victim ever being aware of what has happened until he wakes up.

—RAFAEL DE NOGALES



OUR Camp-fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The spirit of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.



ASK *Adventure*

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Bengal

CURRY, rice and *dhal*, a diet you have to get used to in a land where cattle are sacred and goat and stringy chicken are purchasable only in cities of 100,000 or more.

Request:—"I am interested in a section of country: Bhimpore, Bengal.

Have not been able to get much information here. As an agriculturist, educator and public health worker with experience in each plus a master degree, I have been offered a position in that district doing educational work.

1. People? Type and attitude toward Americans.
2. Nearest city and approximate size of same?
3. Living conditions and expenses? Is U. S. dollar worth more there—trade value?

—W. F. VANBUSHKIRK, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Reply, by Capt. R. W. van Raven de Sturler:—

1. The total population of Bengal is some 45 million natives, (plus possibly a few thousand whites, mainly in Calcutta) of whom roughly 24 millions are Mohammedans and 21 millions Hindus and several other sects. Their language is Bengali, which is spoken by about 92%; the rest use Hindustani and Urdu. Their attitude toward the whites (and this term always means the British in India) has changed considerably since Ghandi's opposition to the British government some ten to fifteen years ago. Toward other white people in general it is not unfriendly and there seems to be a better general feeling toward Americans. While Americans thus can be considered as enjoying a better standing with the East Indian, one should not expect too much from any

Indian, whose peculiar views, manners and, for lack of a better word, culture, differ too much from our own to be ever thoroughly understood. The caste and class you will probably have to deal with are mostly peaceful and docile, if Hindus, and more aggressive, intellectual and less servile, if Mohammedans.

Do not interfere, criticize or laugh at their customs and religion, no matter how ludicrous they may appear to you and other whites—both races are extremely sensitive on these subjects. Treat them kindly and justly but strictly, so they will respect you; and do not let them impose on your good nature in any way or manner, because they are most apt to go to extremes.

In fact, in all the years that I have lived in many parts of India, I have only once found it necessary to use my hands and, in this case, the native servant was drunk and entered (and refused to leave) the house with his shoes on and his turban off. Which, in India, represents an insult to the white man and can not be permitted to pass without correction of the most decided character.

2. Only towns of more than 100,000 population are considered cities in India; anything below that number is either a town or a village, whose population does not include more than a few whites. In your case, Calcutta is the nearest city; it has about 1¼ million inhabitants, a good many Europeans, say from 1000 to 18000 of all classes, such as merchants, Civil Service employees of various social rank, mechanics, officials, etc., among whom, just as among the natives, there is maintained a certain caste system which, according to British views, forms social barriers that may not be tampered with if one desires to remain on pleasant terms with his own class or caste.

3. The exchange value of the U. S. dollar is prac-

tically three rupees, but its purchasing power in terms of food far exceeds that, unless one insists upon living on imported stuff mainly. You will find in time that the native food, such as curry, rice and *dhal*, has a certain appeal to the white man, and if you develop this appeal you can live daily for about one dollar American and live well on it. Of course, you will have to do without meat (except in cities) because the cow is sacred and, excepting the chicken which is very stringy, only goat is obtainable under various fancy names and even then is not palatable.

Horse

GAITS. The walk, trot and canter are natural. The rack, pace and fox trot, artificial.

Request:—"Just what is a gaited horse? Recently I saw an ad reading, 'For sale, three-gaited saddle-horse.' What did that mean? Do they come by these gaits naturally, or are they broken to them? How is a horse taught to guide by the neck?"

—FRANK MAZZER, Peekskill, New York

Reply, by Mr. Thomas H. Dameron:—"A three-gaited horse is a walk, trot, canter horse, all of which are natural gaits. A five-gaited horse has these gaits and two of the artificial gaits, such as rack, stepping pace, or fox trot. In a horse show the three-gaited horse is shown with clipped mane, while the five-gaited horse is shown with full flowing mane.

To neck-rein a horse, you use the bearing rein; that is, to turn right you bear the left rein against the neck.

Logger

HE MUST be prepared to face cooties, hard boiled companions and low wages.

Request:—"I would like to spend some time in the Maine woods, or in its vicinity. I would like to get a job in the open and I would prefer it to be fairly strenuous. I thought a lumber camp would fulfill both these conditions.

Is there any chance of getting a job in one of these camps?"—WILLIAM ROGER, New York City.

Reply, by Mr. H. B. Stanwood:—"This year it will be hard for an outsider to secure work in the woods unless he is an experienced woodsman. Life in a lumber camp for a city man is not what it is cracked up to be: the average woodsman is hard boiled, you have cooties, lice and other little things to contend with. Conditions in what we call a home crew are a little different, as about all the workers are picked up in the small settlements. If a person could get in one of those it would be O. K. Write to the Bangor Free Employment Bureau, Bangor, Maine, and perhaps you can get in connection with something that you desire. This year work is at a low ebb in

all States, and wages are very low. I would say that woodsmen's wages would not be more than \$25.00 to \$36.00 a month this year, for the best woodsmen.

Yucatan

WHERE the ox-carts have seven-foot wheels on account of the rocky roads, a motorcycle ought to find travel adventurous.

Request:—"Starting next May on a motorcycle trip, which route would you advise to take through your territory?"—ALFRED HEART, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. W. Russell Sheets:—"If you want to see if it can be done, there is a road from Campeche toward the southern end of the state of that same name that follows the line of the railroad between there and the city of Merida. Merida is a beautiful city of 100,000 that is all paved; Campeche has no paving nor has any other town in Part 3.* From Merida you can work your way north and east to Valladolid—the end of the railway and sixteen kilometers farther to the last hacienda on the frontier. There is a trail kept open from there, for pack trains, that runs out to the coast opposite the Island of Cosumel. These roads I mention are terrible. There are no mountains, but the stones in them account for the ox-carts that use them having wheels seven feet in diameter so that the axle will be sure to clear them. There is a spur of concrete road that takes off from the road to Valladolid that runs back about twenty kilometers to the world famed Maya ruins of Chichen Itza.

There is no way to get into Part 3 of Mexico save by boat. Even the revolutionists have to flee that way. They can pick their way back into upper Guatemala but not up into upper Mexico.

Crawl

A COMFORTABLE little thrash—not a wide scissors kick—is featured in the eight-beat double rhythm stroke, which Miss Gertrude Ederle used to conquer the rough Channel in record time.

Request:—"Is it possible to swim a half mile or more using the thrash, without the scissors, and not get winded in the process? It has been my experience when trying to swim more than a couple of hundred yards I am all in and have to change to the scissors kick. With this kick I can go several miles and not mind it, the only trouble being that I can not average any better than a mile in forty minutes."

—S. J. KONDRACK, Edwardsville, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Louis De B. Handley:—"The up-to-date crawl swimming strokes, the six and eight-beat double rhythm varieties, are being used success-

*Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and states of Yucatan and Campeche.

fully for long distance races the world over, yet they feature no wide scissors kick. The major rhythm beats, or kicks, are only a very little wider than the minor.

Miss Gertrude Ederle used the eight-beat in conquering the Channel in record time, a particularly convincing achievement in that she encountered the roughest water ever tackled by a swimmer able to complete the twenty-one mile course.

Unquestionably you do not execute the crawl leg drive quite correctly if you cannot cover more than a few hundred yards without tiring. All the world's greatest middle and long distance swimmers use it.

I imagine your trouble is due to one of two things; either you put too much energy in the thrash, or you make the action rigid. The leg drive should be performed comfortably, with muscles supple, completely relaxed.

British Columbia

A PICTURESQUE, but rather large, province for a walking tour from end to end.

Request:—"1. For a trip on foot through British Columbia will two students need passports, or can we go in on a tourist basis?

2. How much money is required by the government to be in our possession before we can enter the country?

3. Will we be permitted to carry a small bore rifle and a large caliber revolver?

4. Will we be permitted to kill small game such as rabbits, and what will be the cost of the license for that purpose?

5. We wish to take a camera along, and would like to know if there are any regulations pertaining to its use.

6. Can you suggest a rough itinerary?

7. As the proposed trip is to be from the southern boundary of the province to Alaska, and an extremely long one, what foot equipment would you suggest? Hobnails? Boots?

8. Will you roughly outline the general equipment that would be necessary, because I have done no long journeys on foot, and with a pack."

—HEMAN L. HARPSTER, Grand Island, Nebraska

Reply, by Mr. C. Plowden:—1. Tourist; you only have to declare at customs on entry.

2. No question as to what money you have.

3. If in shooting season you can get a permit for your rifle, but revolvers are frowned upon as they are not of any use.

4. A license for shooting small game and fishing \$25.

5. Of course, bring your camera.

6. Can hardly suggest an itinerary as I know so little of your plans. Write Bureau of Information, Victoria (Gov't Bldgs.) and ask for maps and printed regulations, which are complete and free, and when you have digested this matter perhaps I can further help you.

7. Quite an undertaking, but a splendid one. Do you intend to walk, for if so, packing grub will be your difficulty. Strong hobnail boots; and you should need two pair, but there are stores en route.

8. Depends upon the time of year. A pack with back board, change of clothes, frying pan, coffee pot, and all the food you can carry. High boots, breeches, flannel shirt, sweater, raincoat, blankets, etc.

This is an enormous province, and your travel takes you from end to end, and if you can carry it through on foot you will have something to talk about all your life, and should gather all the experience and information you are looking for. It can be done, but it means careful planning. Personally I should advise a horse.

One thing you will find, and that is all the aid the Provincial Police can give. You will not come across any personal danger or annoyance from anybody.

Read "The Glamour of British Columbia" published by Century Co., N. Y.

Victory Medal

ISSUED by all the Allied countries as stipulated at Versailles, but not to be confused with the active service medals struck by Great Britain and France.

Request:—"Why do Britain and France have both a Victory and a World War medal, and under what conditions issued?"

—THOMAS L. PORTER, Bingham Canyon, Utah

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood:—The Treaty of Versailles stipulated that all of the Allied countries should issue a Victory medal, and they also specified the ribbon and the design. Great Britain has always issued a campaign medal in silver, and their war medal, sometimes known as the overseas medal was, as I understand it, given only to those who saw active service. Those who did not leave England received only the Victory medal. About the same proposition applied to the French commemorative medal—that is, those who saw service got this as well as the Victory medal.

Calibers

NOMENCLATURE of cartridges, from the .17 to the 4-bore elephant gun.

Request:—"Quite frequently the discussion comes up as to the bore of rifles. Every one seems to agree as to what a .22, .32, .38, .44 and .45 means, but when we talk of .30-30 there seems to be a general misunderstanding. Now the question I wish answered is: What do the following mean?

.25-20; .30-30; .32-20; .30-40; .40-60; .40-82; etc.

Why is it that they give one term for a certain size gun without any double number, i.e., .303,

almost the same as the .30-30? Any other information as to the caliber of guns would be appreciated."

—GEORGE O. COOPER, Oakland, California

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The nomenclature of cartridges seems to have been originally expressed in one hundredth parts of an inch, as I have boxes of old .44 long rimfire for the Wesson rifle that read "44-100".

Later, as different loads came into use, the number of grains of powder was added as a second identification, and sometimes the bullet weight as well; for instance, the old .44 W.C.F. load was stated in some cases as ".44-40-200" meaning a caliber of .44, 40 grains of black powder, and a 200 grain bullet. The description was not always accurate, however, as the old .38-40, or .38 W.C.F., was really a .40 caliber and used 38 grains of black powder.

Generally speaking, however, the second set of numerals meant the powder charge in terms of black powder. The .30-30 was at first furnished with a black powder load on special orders, and I can remember them being listed for sale myself.

The .303 Savage was originally really that caliber, expressed in 1000th parts of the inch, and the Europeans still use that, or the metric system, in determining calibers. Thus, the .275 in England is the 7mm. in Germany.

Also, the .250-3000 Savage load, means a .25 caliber bullet at 3000 foot seconds velocity, the only cartridge I know of so named.

Calibers seem to have run the line from .17 to the elephant rifle of 4 bore, a bullet actually nearly .90 caliber. I myself own rifles of calibers .22, .25, .275, .30, .303, .315, .32, .38, .40, .44, .45, .50 and .56 and .58, all cartridge arms.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelope and full postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.
3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care Adventure.

Small Boating *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

Canoeing *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 303 Laurel Ave., Libertyville, Illinois.

Motor Boating *Gerald T. White, Montville, New Jersey.*

Motor Camping *Major Chas. G. Percival, M. D., care American Tourist Camp Assn., 152 West 65th St., New York City.*

Yachting *A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.*

Motor Vehicles *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care Adventure.

Automotive and Aircraft Engines *Design, operation and maintenance.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care Adventure.

All Shotguns *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care Adventure.

All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEYAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

Edged Weapons, pole arms and armor.—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 939 Timberman Road, Grandview, Columbus, Ohio.

First Aid on the Trail *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.

Health-Building Outdoors *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

Hiking *CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 322, Westfield, New Jersey.*

Camping and Woodcraft PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tennessee.

Mining and Prospecting Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting; development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Precious and Semi-precious Stones Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystallography, color and chemical composition.—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

Forestry in the United States Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.—WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care of Insular Forester, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada General office, especially immigration work; advertising work, duties of station agent, bill clerk, ticket agent, passenger brakeman and rate clerk. General Information.—R. T. NEWMAN, P. O. Drawer 368, Anaconda, Mont.

Army Matters, United States and Foreign CAPTAIN GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ripon, Wisconsin.

Navy Matters Regulations, history, customs, drill, gunnery; tactical and strategic questions, ships, propulsion, construction, classification; general information. Questions regarding the enlisted personnel and officers except such as contained in the Register of Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.—LIEUT. FRANCIS V. GREENE, U. S. N. R., 442 Forty-ninth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

U. S. Marine Corps CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 541 No. Harper Ave., Hollywood, Cal.

Aviation Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post*, 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Tennis FRED HAWTHORNE, Sports Dept., New York Herald Tribune, New York City.

Basketball I. S. ROSE, 321 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

Bicycling ARTHUR J. LEAMOND, 469 Valley St., South Orange, New Jersey.

Swimming LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

The Sea Part 1 American Waters. Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, shipping offices of American ocean liners; shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 2 Statistics and records of American shipping; names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of all American documentary steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all Government owned vessels.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

The Sea Part 3 British Waters. Also old-time sailing.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care Adventure.

The Sea Part 4 Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts. (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care Adventure.

The Sea Part 5 The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.—CAPT. DINGLE, care Adventure.

The Sea Part 6 Arctic Ocean. (Siberian Waters).—CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care Adventure.

Hawaii DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care Adventure.

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

★ **New Guinea** Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.—I. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, JR., care Adventure.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 3432 83rd Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

Horses Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.—THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1006 E. 10th St., Pueblo, Colo.

Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care Adventure.

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

Taxidermy SETH BULLOCK, care Adventure.

Entomology General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Herpetology General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois.

Ichthyology Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

Ornithology General information on birds; their habits and distribution.—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

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Photography Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

Linguistics and Ethnology (a) Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology. (b) Languages and the problems of race migration. (c) Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care Adventure.

Old Songs that Men Have Sung ROBERT W. GORDON, *Archive of American Folk-Song; Library of Congress*, Washington, D. C.

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